

# IN THESE TIMES

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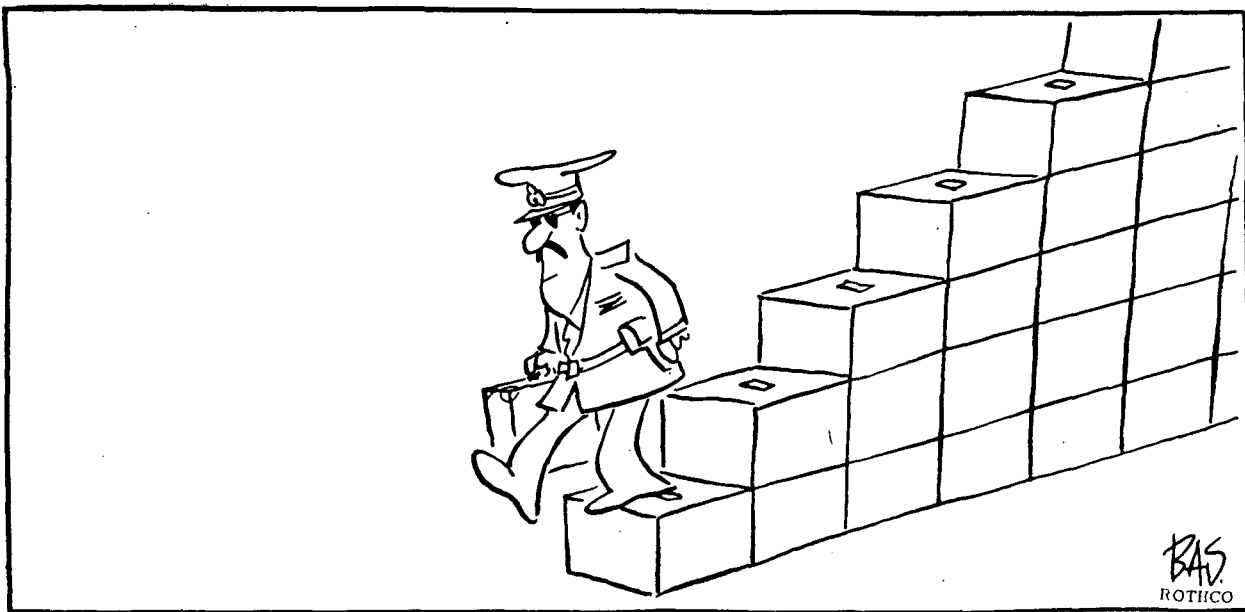
## DEADLY PARADISE

Sri Lanka—Asia's new killing fields



John Colmey reports—page 3





# Democracy is wavering in Venezuela

By Merrill Collett

CARACAS, VENEZUELA

Last February peaceful Venezuela was overrun by its poor in a week of looting and violence that evoked predictions of worse things to come. That hasn't happened—at least not yet. Since the riots, the poor have retreated to their shanty settlements and the middle class have taken to the streets. This new middle-class activism could be just the renovating force Venezuela needs. Or it could lead to a malaise even more dangerous to democracy than the street violence.

Militancy has come only recently to Venezuela's middle class. It was fat and happy for years, thanks to the country's oil affluence. But shortly after the riots, commuters returning to the suburbs of Caracas blocked a highway during rush hour to protest the doubling of mortgage interest rates. (The measure does not affect the poor, who for the most part live rent-free as squatters.) A few days later patrons attending an exclusive cinema staged a sit-down strike of several hours until their money was refunded for projection problems. These middle-class revolts quickly passed into legend, and others followed—a consumer bread boycott, a strike by 500 medical doctors, a march against government corruption.

I sampled middle-class discontent while sitting by a suburban swimming pool on a summer Saturday. Three days earlier (June 14) a group of neatly dressed, nicely coiffured housewives had walked out on an eight-lane highway nearby, bringing rush-hour traffic to a halt. The housewives were demonstrating against a water shortage

in their otherwise comfortable community. Like them, my swimming pool companion, the owner of an auto parts store, was unhappy with the way things were going in Venezuela, but he didn't see protests as the way out. He leaned toward a military coup. "I mean, I'm not for it, but if it comes, let it come," he said. Until recently such talk was strictly taboo. The Venezuelan middle class is not coup-prone. Quite the opposite. Democracy has been a source of enormous national pride. Oil made Venezuela affluent, but democracy made it praiseworthy. Aside from tiny Costa Rica, Venezuela is the only nation in all of Latin America where rival political parties have peacefully and fairly competed for power for 30 years. Venezuela's modern identity was forged around that fact.

**The young and the restless:** Now Venezuelan identity is in crisis. New factors have entered into the old formula. Petroleum profits are no longer the constant upon which everything else can depend. World oil prices are half of what they were five years ago, and so are living standards. Politicians wise enough to found a democracy are now old men foolishly holding on to power and frustrating a young, restless generation. Raised in affluence, the young have lots of expectations and little money.

The store owner I met at the swimming pool is in his 30s, and he is desperate. Since February record-breaking inflation has more than doubled prices. Business is stagnant. The only growth industry is crime, and the police are ineffective. Homeowners have formed vigilante groups. Venezuela no longer looks like a country in which to raise a family. "We've thought about emigrating," said the store owner, "but where would we go?" Venezuelan visa applications to the U.S. are up 25 percent. "They're scared to death," said a senior State Department official.

Fear is the stuff of which military coups are made. "Venezuela has become just another Latin American country," said one diplomat with experience in the region. "And that means a coup is possible." No one would have said that before the riots in February. Now few would deny it. A former president has gone so far as to say that a coup campaign is underway. "The military question is raising anxieties in the upper levels of the political class," began a recent column by Alfredo Peña, the James Reston of Venezuelan journalism.

The generals insist they are loyal to democracy, but the politicians have cause for concern. The danger doesn't come from a Venezuelan version of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Unlike Chile, there is no military caste in Venezuela. Officers are recruited out of the middle class, and that means they share its discontents. The chief middle-class complaint is that political corruption is ruining the country. If a coup comes, it will come in the name of defending democracy by doing away with dirty politicians.

Corruption has been a part of every Venezuelan government, civilian and military alike, but the pillage reached new proportions during the democratic epoch that began in 1958. Democracy diffused political power, and that put more hands in the cookie jar. Coincidentally, the nationalization of oil, and its skyrocketing price, stuffed the cookie jar full of petrodollars. Like manna from heaven, \$10 billion in windfall profits dropped into state

coffers in one year alone, the "oil shock" year of 1973. No one knows how much of these and other public monies was stolen, but the looting was so systematic that it was the system. Kickbacks, bribes, "loans" and "commissions" became the legitimate booty of political battles fought by the two main parties.

**Aftermath of a scam:** In the era of oil affluence, corruption was tolerated because there seemed to be enough for everyone, even the crooks. But as the petrodollars have run out, so has the tolerance for government corruption. A reform movement is surging out of the middle class. Urged on by the country's leading man of letters, the venerable octogenarian Arturo Uslar Pietri, 10,000 demonstrators marched through downtown Caracas in mid-June to launch "a struggle for public morality." The catalyst for this unprecedented protest was an especially onerous scandal, "the Recadi case."

Recadi is the Spanish acronym for the Office of Differential Exchange Rate Controls. Even by Venezuelan standards, it was a record-breaking ripoff. The now-defunct government agency was set up in 1983 to sell cheap dollars to importers so they could bring in essential goods at affordable prices. In theory Recadi was intended to shield the economy from the full force of the devaluation brought on by the oil price collapse. In practice the agency became "a big gold mine exploited by everybody from the doorman on up," said John Pate, a U.S. attorney who has been following the case for his clients back home.

## INSIDE STORY

The scam was simple enough. With a little help from their politician friends, businessmen bought cheap dollars from the central bank and then sold them on the free market at premium prices. At least \$2 billion is missing. Who got the money? Who knows? So far all that can be said is that a former development minister has apparently tried to commit suicide, leaving a note that reportedly implicated other Cabinet members; a leader of a prominent business family has been jailed; and the former president's mistress and private secretary has been accused by a congressman of stashing about \$6 million in a Miami bank even though her salary was a mere \$400 a month. The list doesn't end there, however. The judge in charge of investigating Recadi has been accused of a number of irregularities, including asking for payoffs not to prosecute.

As the Recadi case bogs down in more complications, the likelihood increases that it will sink into oblivion like all previous scandals, which have produced few, if any, prosecutions. But Recadi has aroused public anger like no other scandal. Venezuela's worst case of corruption coming on top of the country's worst economic crisis is simply too much to bear. A graffiti appearing often these days on the walls of middle-class neighborhoods says it all—*arrechate*, get pissed off. The middle class is mad. If mad enough, it may opt for a military solution. After all, Latin America's military coups traditionally come about at the request of disgruntled citizens.

But there are other, more hopeful, scenarios. The Recadi case could end up reinforcing, rather than undermining, the system if it helps create a consensus for change. The moment is ripe for reform. Carried forward by the middle class, a nationwide Neighborhood Movement has been gaining influence for years, but in the last few months it has sprung to center stage with a campaign for elected, rather than politically appointed, mayors. It appears the campaign will be successful in getting elections in December.

Municipal elections could sweep out corrupt party hacks from the ground up. At least that's the hope of the middle-class reformers. Are they hoping for too much? If the reform impulse fades into fatigue, the days may be numbered for Venezuelan democracy.

Merrill Collett is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

## CONTENTS

Inside Story: Is a coup around the corner in Venezuela?	2
Heading for corporate buyout burnout	3
In Short	4
Navajos coping with a radioactive legacy	6
Jesse's been here all along, but he's back again anyway	7
Flight for the environment	8
Defiance builds in South Africa	9
Sri Lanka: inferno in paradise	10
Chainsaw massacre in Northwest woodlands	12
Editorial	14
Letters: Sylvia	15
Ashes & Diamonds by Alexander Cockburn	16
Viewpoint: Serfing on California's campuses	17
In Print: Eric Foner's <i>Reconstruction</i>	18
Cornell West's <i>Evasion of Philosophy</i>	19
In the Arts: <i>PrimeTime Live</i> and other dead weight	20
Classifieds/Life in Hell	23
Tony Buba's trek from Rustville to Tinseltown	24

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By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON, D.C.

**T**HE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ECONOMY of the '20s and the economy today are increasingly more striking. Both periods suffered from a breakdown of the open trading system, a shaky international monetary system, intractable international debt (German then, Third World now) and rising internal debt. Most important of all, Americans suffered in both periods from a surface prosperity that encouraged complacency about the economy's underlying ills.

Several important bankers and economists have tried to puncture this complacency. One of the latest is Carolyn Kay Brancato, chief economist at the New York law firm of Weil, Gotshal & Manges. In a report written for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Brancato warns that the rapid increase in leveraged buyouts (LBOs) threatens to create an intolerable debt burden on individual firms and on the economy as a whole. An avalanche of loan defaults by LBO-financed firms has lent Brancato's report added weight.

**Corporations as commodities:** LBOs have been occurring for more than three decades. In a typical LBO, the management of a publicly held firm, with the help of an investment banking firm, raises the money to buy its own firm from the public. To raise the money, they use the company itself as collateral. The firm then becomes private. The purpose of many LBOs has been simply to wrest control of a company from a stockholder or group of stockholders. That's still a prime motive in LBOs, especially as managers try to fend off corporate raiders. But in the last decade a couple of new wrinkles were added.

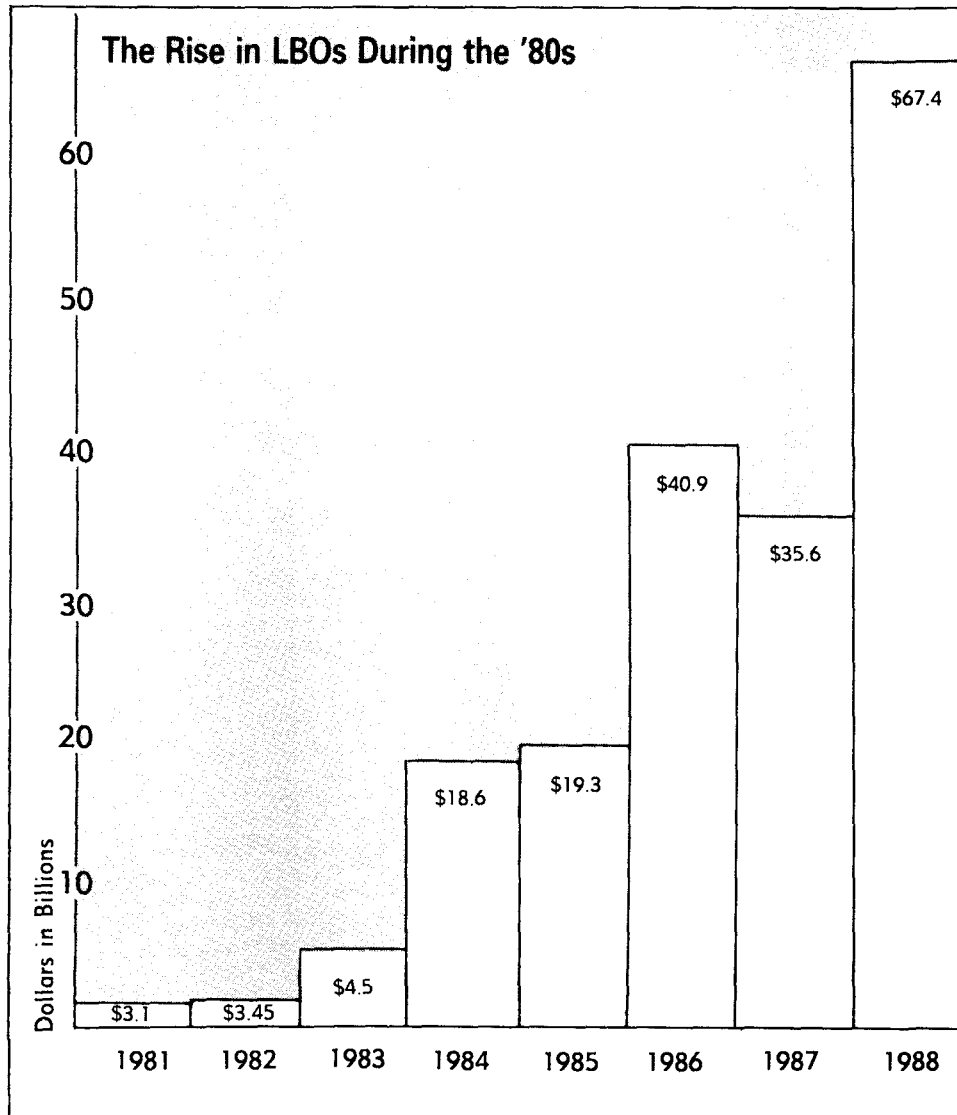
In a 1982 LBO involving the Gibson greeting card company, former Treasury Secretary William Simon showed that investment bankers and managers can make a killing with LBOs. Simon's Wesray Capital, acting with Gibson's management, bought the firm from RCA for \$80 million. When Wesray and Gibson's management took the firm public again a year and a half later, its value had climbed to \$290 million—the result of a bull stock market and an initially undervalued company. In stock and fees, Simon alone made \$66 million on an investment of \$330,000.

Simon showed that managers and investment bankers could make big money buying firms and then selling them back to the public. As investment bankers rushed to follow Simon's example, corporations became commodities. "In the eyes of financial institutions," Frederic Dannen wrote in the banking publication *Institutional Investor*, "a large cross section of corporate America [became] a collection of properties to be bought and sold and flipped like high-rises, office buildings and shopping malls."

The investment firm of Drexel Burnham Lambert added the other ingredient to the LBO boom. Before the '80s, investors who wanted to take a firm private had to satisfy finicky commercial bank officials. But Drexel Burnham showed that investors could circumvent commercial banks by raising money through riskier high-interest bonds called "junk bonds." In 1982 Brancato reports, only 3 percent of LBOs were financed through junk bonds; in 1988, 43 percent were.

Investment bankers had a special incen-

## Manic rush of LBO debt threatens world depression



Source: House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation.

tive to encourage the use of junk bonds. They received much higher fees from peddling the riskier paper. In 1988, for instance, investment bankers received fees of \$914.8 million from 158 junk bond deals, while receiving \$489.2 million for selling 789 investment-grade bonds. LBOs and junk bonds created an entirely new group of Wall Street super-millionaires, such as Drexel Burnham's

### Leveraged buyouts encourage short-term thinking at the expense of the long term.

Michael Milken and the three founding partners of Kravis, Kohlberg and Roberts (KKR), all of whom are now worth more than \$300 million.

The example of these investment bankers has whipped up enthusiasm for LBOs. From 1981 through 1984, the total value of LBOs was \$11.1 billion. From 1984 to the end of 1988, it was \$181.9 billion, climaxed by KKR's \$25.3 billion buyout of RJR-Nabisco in October 1988.

**Defaulting on loans:** LBOs work by swapping debt for stock ownership—a practice rewarded by the tax system, which allows debtors to deduct interest payments. In the pre-1980 LBOs, these swaps did not necessarily create large debts, but in the '80s, as investment firms and management groups compete with each other and with corporate raiders to buy out stockholders, the price of

LBOs has wildly escalated. In the spring of 1987, when raider Asher Edelman tried to buy Burlington Industries, its stock was selling for as low as \$44.25 a share. By the time Morgan Stanley outbid Edelman, the stock sold for \$78 a share.

As the price has risen, the debt carried by individual firms has risen accordingly. Even after Burlington, in an attempt to pay off its debt, sold off 11 of its most successful plants and subsidiaries, its debt was 96 percent of its sales. A minor slump in sales could plunge Burlington into default. At U.S. Gypsum, interest payments absorbed 23 percent of pretax earnings in 1987. The next year, after an LBO, interest payments took 90 percent of U.S. Gypsum's earnings.

As debt payments have risen, managers' and bankers' strategies have also changed. In the Gibson case, Simon relied on a shrewd assessment of Gibson's assets and an optimistic projection of the market. Now, investment bankers, like corporate raiders, assume that a company's parts are worth more than the whole. They pay debts by selling off firms' most profitable assets and drastically cutting costs. But as LBO prices have skyrocketed, the investment bankers have been increasingly proven wrong.

According to an August 21 *Washington Post* report, 26 major corporations operating under LBOs are threatening to default on their loans. Recently, several major LBO companies, including Fruehauf, the nation's largest producer of truck trailers, and Revco, formerly the nation's largest drug store chain, have gone bankrupt. According to a

Sept. 11 *Business Week* cover story, there has been a record \$4 billion in bond defaults and debt moratoriums so far this year.

**Mountain of debt:** LBOs still have their defenders. Harvard Business School's Michael Jensen argues that by raising debt levels, LBOs force managers to become more efficient and to cut unnecessary costs. Investment banking firm Clayton and Dubilier contends that by removing stockholder pressures, LBOs permit managers to focus on a company's long-term rather than short-term prospects. But these arguments are ludicrous. As Brancato notes, there have been successful LBOs where the company has emerged far stronger, but these have mostly involved smaller companies and have occurred before 1984. The current billion-dollar LBOs have few redeeming features.

Today's LBOs encourage short-term thinking and discourage long-term planning. Managers have to focus on keeping cash flow high enough to pay monthly interest payments. They can forgo dividends on stock but can't stop paying interest without defaulting on their loans. LBOs also have led companies to slash capital spending and to reduce expenditures for research and development. This winter, the U.S. National Science Foundation released a study of 200 companies that account for 90 percent of industrial R&D spending. The 24 that were involved in mergers or LBOs suffered a combined 5.3 percent decline in R&D spending between 1986 and 1987, while the other companies enjoyed a 5.4 percent increase.

Most dangerous of all, the LBOs have created a mountain of debt that could easily come tumbling down and turn a mild recession into a depression. In the '80s, the debts of non-financial corporations have skyrocketed, largely because of LBOs. In 1955, for instance, corporations used 13.5 percent of their internal funds for debt service; by 1988, they were using 65.1 percent. In 1983, the debt of non-financial corporations amounted to 32 percent of GNP; by 1988, it had climbed to 42 percent. The debt is also of poor quality, more short- than long-term, and more heavily weighted toward junk bonds.

**Bringing down the banks:** LBOs also threaten the stability of commercial banks. According to William Seidman, head of the U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, LBO lending accounts for more than 50 percent of the loan activity of the 10 largest multinational banks.

Investment consultant Henry Kaufman, former executive director of Salomon Bros., warns that this structure could crumble during a recession. In congressional testimony last February Kaufman said: "What is important to bear in mind is that this decapitalization of so much of American industry has come into vogue under relatively benign economic conditions. The weakened financial structure of many corporations has not been tested during a business contraction. When it comes, there will not be the swollen sales, revenues and corporate income readily available to serve a bloated mass of debt that there is today."

Five years ago financial experts warned that loan defaults by a major Third World country could precipitate an international collapse. The danger remains. But now the threat of corporate defaults by LBOs has become an equally ominous threat to American, and by extension, international economic stability.

IN THESE TIMES SEPTEMBER 13-19, 1989 3



# IN SHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

## The continuing threat

Following a U.S. Army initiative, the State Department, the Defense Department, the CIA and other federal agencies have spent the past year in a semantic imbroglio. The Army is trying to redefine "assassination" so that it will both satisfy all federal agencies and conform to Gerald Ford's 1976 presidential order banning assassination. This spring *Defense Week*, a publication of the military-industrial complex, reported that the Army's main lawyer, Maj. Gen. Hugh Overholt, released an eight-page internal report that searches for a way the U.S. can eliminate "terrorists" yet not violate federal law. Overholt writes: "The employment of military force against a terrorist or terrorist organization to protect U.S. citizens or the national security of the U.S. is a legitimate exercise of the international legal right of self-defense and does not constitute assassination." He argues that because terrorists "pose a continuing threat," any U.S. attack on such terrorists would actually be an act of "self-defense." Overholt's proposal is similar to that of former CIA General Counsel Stanley Sporkin's 1982 opinion that the "neutralization" of terrorists was not assassination but, rather, a "pre-emptive defensive action." ("In Short," July 5.) As Army spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Bridges explained to the *Washington Post's* Norman Black: "There is nothing classified about this effort.... This is an attempt to define what is an assassination and what is prohibited and what is not.... If we're going after terrorists as a matter of self-defense, that is not assassination but the proper employment of military force." Of course, no one has bothered to define "terrorist," and it must be supposed that will be part of the charm of the new definition of "assassination."

## Narco-terrorists

The *Intelligence Newsletter*, a Paris-based weekly, reports that it has learned from a congressional source that the National Security Council is "drafting a directive to broaden the war on drugs and to explicitly include assassination of foreign drug lords." Could assassination be one of the jobs for the CIA's recently created Counter Narcotics Center? CIA spokesman William Devine says the center's "mission is to more effectively use intelligence to help form the policy required to address the security problems raised by narcotics. It will lend analytical and operational support to the effort against international narcotics trafficking."

## Drug war uber alles

*Time* magazine reports that drug czar William Bennett has considered decapitating convicted drug dealers. "There is no moral problem there," he said. "I used to teach ethics—trust me." It has yet to be discovered whether the domestic drug lords—what the administration calls the "drug kingpins"—will become targets for assassination. One thing is known—Bush is ready for war. What follows are the relevant highlights of last week's drug speech: "Turn on the evening news or pick up the morning paper and you'll see what some Americans know just by stepping out their front door: Our most serious problem today is cocaine, and in particular, crack.... We need more prisons, more jails, more courts, more prosecutors.... We will help any government that wants our help. When requested, we will for the first time make available the appropriate resources of America's armed forces.... And for drug kingpins, the death penalty.... Every school, college and university—and every workplace—must adopt tough but fair policies about drug use by students and employees. Those that will not adopt such policies will not get federal funds. Period.... The private sector has a role to play [by working with advertisers and media firms to generate] a million dollars worth of airtime every day for the next three years—a billion dollars total. Think of it, a billion dollars of television time, all to promote the anti-drug message. As president, one of my first missions is to keep the national focus on our offensive against drugs.... These are the most important elements in our strategy to fight drugs. They are all designed to reinforce one another, to mesh into a powerful whole, to mount an aggressive attack on the problem from every angle.... If we fight this war as a divided nation, then the war is lost. But if we face this evil as a nation united, this will be nothing but a handful of useless chemicals. Victory, victory over drugs is our cause, a just cause, and with your help, we are going to win."



**Family portrait:** An angry resident of the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn confronts photographer David Vita. Vita was trying to take a picture of the man's wife and daughter who are heckling demonstrators protesting the murder of black youth Yusuf Hawkins. Moments later the man attacked.

## Summer in Guatemala: the untold story

If somebody had decided to mark the 10th anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution by blowing up the offices of *La Prensa*, denunciations of the Sandinistas' violent denial of free expression would have saturated the U.S. press. Instead, it was a television station in Guatemala that was attacked for broadcasting news of neighboring Nicaragua's revolutionary celebrations, and the mainstream media here remained silent.

Telesiete Channel-7 had ignored numerous threats not to report on the anniversary, and on July 19 the station covered the celebrations and broadcast an interview with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. That night its transmission tower, located 16 miles outside Guatemala City, was blown up and Roberto Perez Panagua, a 62-year-old nightwatchman, was shot dead. The Associated Press put the story on the wire, where it languished, its news value apparently considered of no consequence by

the foreign editors of the major U.S. newspapers.

The studied neglect of violence in Guatemala has been standard procedure since the election in 1986 of President Vinicio Cerezo, a man regularly portrayed by the U.S. press and politicians as courageously leading his country along a path to democratization. This image was enhanced by the attempted coup of May 9, and, having survived the plot, Cerezo has also avoided any U.S. criticism of the human rights situation in Guatemala, which has reached a new level of horror since May. Americas Watch reports that the attempted coup resulted in a "strengthening of those sectors in the army least disposed to allow a modicum of respect for human rights."

For example, on May 24 a company of 100 soldiers terrorized the town of Santa Maria Caba. The military destroyed houses and crops and abducted four people, including five-year-old Pedro Santiago. Eight-year-old Manuel Cobo was shot and killed. According to the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, the number of disappearances and extrajudicial killings

since May 9 surpasses last year's total and "will at this rate exceed by the end of the year the combined number of well-documented political killings in the past three years."

Cerezo dismissed the increased killings as "a wave of common violence and criminality" and, with the help of the U.S. government, cossets the military with improved means of destruction. On June 23 Cerezo agreed to buy two military transport planes from an Italian company at a cost of \$42 million. A week later the United States sent the Guatemalan army 32 military trucks worth \$650,000. And on July 19 the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Foreign Authorization Bill that includes a \$9 million military aid package for 1990.

Guatemalan labor leader and opposition representative at the U.N. and the Organization of American States Frank LaRue says the attempted coup in May "was successful in forcing concessions out of Cerezo." But this is not unusual. An old joke in Guatemala is that the only "democracy" there is exercised through military coups. —Rich McKerrow

## Workplace democracy

BOSTON—It took a tough 17 years of organizing for the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW) to win a contract. But it

has been worth the wait: not only is the union's first contract good for the Harvard workers, it is an example of new approaches that organizers of the pink-collar workforce can adopt.

Going further than past power-sharing plans, the pact establishes

worker-management councils that will have real power in addressing workplace issues.

Worker-management committees will be set up in all university departments. The committees will examine issues such as changes in work process, building renovations, affirma-





1989 David Vita

## Heaven and Helms

WASHINGTON—Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) and his powerful political cronies have linked arms with Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church.

According to 1988 congressional disclosure forms, Helms received \$10,000 in honoraria from the American Leadership Conference (ALC) for giving five speeches. ALC events are secretive, by invitation only and sponsored by CAUSA, a political branch of the Unification Church. Helms gave 14 speeches last year for which he earned \$26,500. Since Helms spoke only twice to tobacco groups, the coziness with the Moon group is curious indeed.

The ALC brings together conservative activists and elected officials for issue briefings, strategy sessions and indoctrination in what organizers call "CAUSA ideology," or "Godism." At these events, Godism is offered as a rallying point for religious people to wage ideological warfare on atheism and communism.

CAUSA and Godism are presented as distinct from the church. CAUSA chief Bo Hi Pak told one ALC, "I'm not here to promote Unification theology." But in Unification circles, Godism is Unificationism. Top Moonist evangelist Chung Hwan Kwak wrote in the church's missionary magazine in 1983: "Democracy arose out of a lack of absolute values, absolute power and absolute being. When there are no absolutes, the majority opinion is considered the best idea. Godism, however, has not been the majority idea. God's teaching has not been the majority teaching. Therefore through democratic elections, people have not selected

tive action, and health and safety concerns. Issues where the two sides can't agree will be decided by higher-level joint committees, until, if still unresolved, mediators will be called in.

The recently agreed-on contract also calls for an average raise in employee salaries of 32 percent over three years, a low-cost child care center, increased maternity and paternity benefits, more personal sick days that can be used for family illnesses and upgraded health benefits.

For Nancy Kates, a union member on the negotiating committee, the 83 percent female union saw their struggle for the contract as a "test case for American labor." After losing two elections, the union won a university-wide election last year by the narrowest of margins. The National Labor Relations Board later scolded Harvard for appealing to overturn the election without offering any evidence of significant wrongdoing by the union.

From this moral high ground, the union took an unexpected tack at the beginning of negotiations. The union proposed that instead of each side opening with specific bargaining positions, the two sides meet in committees during a non-adversarial transition process. During the

first two months, the two sides discussed goals and philosophies—getting to know each other rather than bickering over contentious issues. Throughout the sometimes-difficult negotiations, union negotiators strove to maintain cooperative, non-adversarial working relationships.

The success of the negotiations is also due, in part, to Harvard's uniqueness: "Where else," one union supporter asked, "would the employer's chief negotiator be a former U.S. secretary of labor?" John Dunlop, the Harvard professor who served in Ford's Cabinet (and before that as Nixon's price-control czar), says that he was "less concerned with short-run advantage" over the union than with setting up a system that would work for the university years down the road.

Harvard, Dunlop says, wanted "to be ahead of the curve instead of behind it" in relation to the broad social issues that concern the Harvard workforce.

Whether other unions can achieve similar workplace democracy and bread-and-butter gains is an open question. But at least for the 3,500 members of HUACW, the years spent working under one of the country's most paternalistic employers are over.

—Mark Feinberg

God's will, goodness, True Parents, or the messiah. Our goal and purpose is to follow Godism." ("True Parents" are Mr. and Mrs. Moon, and the "True Family" is the church.) Moon's followers believe he is the Messiah who will lead a new world order, the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. The official language will be Korean.

Moon has repeatedly denounced American democracy. *U.S. News and World Report* reports that in 1987 Moon said: "History will make the position of Rev. Moon clear, and his enemies, the American population and government, will bow down to him." Moon has also declared he seeks the "subjugation" of the U.S. and "an automatic theocracy to rule the world."

Since the early '80s, CAUSA has hosted hundreds of conferences for such constituency groups as clergy, retired military officers and state legislators. These evolved into the more elite ALC conferences, which have served as recruiting posts for the American Freedom Coalition (AFC), which was founded in 1987. Through the AFC the Moon organization has joined forces with other elements of the religious right. Invest-

igative reports by Knight Ridder Newspapers and *U.S. News and World Report* conclude that the AFC is organizing nationally for a potential third party of the religious right. "The time is here now for the work of CAUSA and the AFC," Moon told his seminary graduates in 1988. "Father [Moon] has already laid the foundation in order to reach national and state politicians."

AFC leadership includes former members of Congress Richard Ichord (D-MO), Bob Wilson (R-CA), Christian Voice President Robert Grant, former civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy and right-wing direct-mail entrepreneur Richard Viguerie. Helms associates Tom Ellis and Carter Wrenn are members of the AFC advisory board and national policy board, respectively.

"The time will come," proclaimed Moon in 1987, "when even a presidential candidate will need Father's [Moon's] endorsement in order to succeed."

Sen. Helms' office did not return calls about his involvement with the ALC.

—Fred Clarkson

A version of this story appeared in the *City Paper of Washington, D.C.*



Carla Figueroa

## Spy nest

George Bush isn't the only CIA veteran to summer in Kennebunkport, Maine. This past June, 130 members of the New England chapter of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO) gathered in Kennebunk to see old friends and reminisce about those halcyon nights when no one quibbled over legalities. At least a dozen former spies have hung up their cloaks and daggers and now live in Kennebunk or Kennebunkport, including four of the AFIO's New England chapter's 11 directors.

## The New Republican

This past March Vice President Dan Quayle was asked about his reading habits by the *Wall Street Journal*. He responded, in part: "I used to, I've read *National Review*—some. I used to read *Human Events*. Don't read it as much as I used to. The *American Spectator*—it's hard to get through the *American Spectator*..." In retaliation, the June issue of the *American Spectator*, a magazine of right-wing humor and thought, lampooned the intellectual muster of the vice president in its cover story, "Why Danny Can't Read." That bit of satire caused a lot of conservatives to go bug-eyed. Responding to numerous letters, Editor R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. in the August issue explained the reasons behind the *American Spectator*'s remedial humor. He wrote, "Somehow I think the vice president should have been able to avoid diminishing the stature of the small number of conservative publications that regularly take on the vast majority of publications antithetical to him and his ideas." But what really got Tyrrell's goat was the final sentence of Quayle's *Wall Street Journal* quote—a sentence so damning that the *American Spectator* had originally not published it. Quayle continued with his reading list, "... And the *New Republic* [his voice brightening]. I enjoy reading *New Republic* articles." This annoyed Tyrrell, both because Quayle "groveled before the *New Republic*" and because the *New Republic* "sent that vice presidential yawp to all our mutual advertisers."

## Bush's chemical abuse

The Center for Defense Information, a Washington-based think tank, reports that President Bush is now asking Congress for \$265.5 million for the development and production of chemical weapons in 1990 and 1991. According to the American Chemical Society, a professional society of chemists, the U.S. has enough chemical weapons stockpiled to kill everyone in the world 5,000 times over. Of course, that is not possible. A couple things stand in the way of the U.S.' ability to wage a truly effective chemical war. New bombs looming on the chemical warfare horizon aim to address that problem. A special Pentagon study group called "Deep Fire" is examining the feasibility of equipping long-range ballistic missiles and air- and sea-launched cruise missiles with chemical warheads. At the same time, the Army is brewing exotic poisons so powerful that all protective measures will be useless—these cutting-edge chemicals are known as "mask breakers."

## President Bentsen

*Texas Observer* publisher Ronnie Dugger recently wrote in his Austin-based biweekly: "Sen. Lloyd Bentsen [D-TX] wants the Democratic nomination for president in 1992. I have a fully reliable basis for reporting this fact. Bentsen's orders to his staff are to make it happen.... The question is whether 'Texas' will go for Bentsen or will there be a revolt by progressive Democrats who know him for what he is, a complicated but dedicated agent of the major corporate interests.... Bentsen's nomination for president by the Democratic Party in 1992 would be, I believe, the culmination of the creeping takeover of the national Democratic Party apparatus by corporation lawyers and the interests they represent.... If Bentsen is nominated for president by the Democrats, we no longer will have two parties. This will be a de facto one-party country, just as Texas was until recently a one-party state. The corporations will run everything. Something fundamental will have to happen then to restore American politics to health."

## Toot, toot

In its first annual Alternative Press Awards, the *Utne Reader*—the *Readers Digest* of the alternative press—gave *In These Times* the award for investigative journalism. According to the *Utne Reader*, "This leftist newsweekly augments its solid, balanced coverage of national and international events with authoritative, well-written reports on government and business malfeasance, as well as stand-out environmental stories."



By Ramona Gault

CHURCH ROCK, N.M.

## Navajos inherit a legacy of radiation

ONLY A GLIMMER OF WATER FLOWS IN THE Rio Puerco these dry, dusty summer days. Navajos living along the river on the Arizona-New Mexico state line tend their sheep, goats, cows and horses as they have for generations, leading them to sparse patches of grass and hauling water for them. It's a land of red rock mesas, pickup trucks, picture-postcard sunsets and harsh realities.

Realities like nuclear contamination.

On July 16 about 200 of the area Navajos gathered here to chant, dance and remember an event that the rest of the nation has forgotten: the nation's largest-ever accidental spill of radioactive materials.

Ten years ago on that date an earthen dam at a uranium mill near Church Rock collapsed, sending a 94-million-gallon soup of radioactive materials and toxic chemicals down the Rio Puerco more than 100 miles into Arizona.

The yellowish, muddy effluent was acidic enough (1.5 pH) to produce burns on the legs of animals caught in it. The spill also contained various isotopes of uranium, radium, polonium, bismuth, radon, thorium and lead, as well as arsenic, selenium and other heavy metals.

In the weeks after the spill, government agencies erected signs along the river in English, Spanish and Navajo warning people not to drink the water or let animals drink it. The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advised residents not to eat the organs of their livestock. And the mill owner, United Nuclear Corp. (UNC), based in An-

napolis, Md., scraped the top three inches or so of sediment from the riverbed to clean up the radioactive and toxic substances.

Now, 10 years later, the warning signs along the river are gone, fallen to vandals and desert winds. UNC, which shut down the Church Rock mill in the early '80s after the

### ENVIRONMENT

price of uranium dropped precipitously, contends that their cleanup of the riverbed was adequate. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agrees.

But for the 10,000 Navajos living along the Rio Puerco, the spill has left a legacy of uncertainty about the safety of their water—already a scarce resource in this semiarid land. In the past couple of years, the U.S. Geological Survey and a New Mexico environmental group have discovered that radioactivity levels in the Rio Puerco at times are up to 100 times over Arizona's maximum allowable limits for drinking water.

Federal and state officials, as well as environmentalists, tend to agree that the 10-year-old spill is not solely to blame for the high radioactivity levels in the river today. Decades of uranium mining and natural radioactivity present in the rock formations also have contributed, they say.

But the persistence of radioactivity in the

Rio Puerco illustrates how intractable environmental pollution can be. And the Navajo, denied use of a scarce natural resource, must learn how to come to terms with the pollution of their land.

Unlike the residents of Three Mile Island, Pa., many Rio Puerco residents didn't even know what radiation was. "Since we don't have a word for it, we had to try to explain what it does," said Ray Morgan, a Navajo who works in a community education project for Southwest Research and Information Center, an Albuquerque environmental group.

**Invisible enemy:** Since they couldn't see, taste or feel radiation, many of the illiterate, rural Navajos couldn't believe they could be harmed by the water, Morgan said.

But they saw what happened to their livestock after the spill. There are many stories about deformed lambs that died soon after birth, as well as the death of adult animals.

The CDC studied tissue of the Navajos' livestock and reported in 1980 that the Puerco residents were getting "higher than normal" radiation doses, but that it wasn't a significant health threat.

The low-income, rural Navajos had been using water from the Rio Puerco for decades—as had the uranium mining companies. Before mining started in the '50s, the Puerco had been an ephemeral stream, flowing only when fed by snowmelt or thun-

derstorms. The water was far from pristine; it contained lots of sediment and an unknown amount of radioactive material from the region's uranium-bearing rocks.

Beginning in the '50s, the river ran almost continuously with wastewater discharged from uranium mines upstream. The mines lay in the Grants Belt, a swath across New Mexico that may be the most polluted uranium-producing area in the U.S.

Before New Mexico established water standards for the mines in 1977, some mines (not UNC's) dumped untreated wastewater directly into the Puerco. Selenium, radium and uranium were among the contaminants. During those years, no one told the Navajos that the river might not be safe.

In 1983 the EPA discovered that contaminants were leaching into groundwater at UNC's Church Rock mill site. The agency put the site on its Superfund list, and, since then, the EPA and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which licenses the mill, have been wrangling over details of a cleanup of the mine site.

**A tough call:** Gary Konwinski, a geohydrologist with the NRC in Denver, said he thinks UNC will be able to finish its \$25 million cleanup at the site by about 1996. But neither the NRC nor the EPA is taking any action on radioactive contamination in the Puerco and nearby groundwater.

"Anything lost on the Puerco years ago is indistinguishable from what's there now," Konwinski said. "The best scientists couldn't come to a decision on what's there now."

The EPA decided in 1988 that it couldn't determine how much of the Puerco's contamination comes from mining activities and how much from natural conditions. "The tendency is to pin blame on UNC and the spill. That's not true," said Bill Rowe, who manages the UNC cleanup for the EPA in Dallas.

UNC also considers the matter closed. For a few months after the spill, the company trucked in water for Navajos who requested it. In 1985, UNC paid about \$550,000 to some 240 Navajo plaintiffs to settle a lawsuit over the spill. Dick Lange, general counsel for UNC, said in an interview, "The view of the EPA, NRC, EID [New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division], National Institutes of Health and other agencies is that it was adequately cleaned up years ago."

But Chris Shuey, an environmental specialist with Southwest Research and Information Center, said the radioactive particles from mine releases and from the spill may have seeped deeper into the riverbed than anyone suspected. When storm runoff churns up the sediment, the radioactive material comes to the surface, producing the high radioactivity readings that his group and the U.S. Geological Survey are getting with their tests.

Uncertainty over where it is safe to drill wells keeps the area Navajos from developing their scarce water resources, Shuey says.

The Navajos' only choices are trucking in water from distant reservation wells or letting their animals drink from the Puerco. For many, community water systems are either unavailable or prohibitively expensive.

"This is the groundwater of the Navajo who live there, not of the technicians who live in Denver," said Shuey, who has been working with the Navajo for 10 years. "The people who live there, not a dime has been spent on their interests."

Ramona Gault is a Santa Fe, N.M., writer.

### A five-year government study may spill some answers

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has begun a five-year study that could answer some of the Navajos' questions. The agency plans to develop a profile of the contamination along the Puerco-Little Colorado river system, including a health risk assessment, says John Gray, the USGS hydrologist who is leading the \$3.4 million study.

"Virtually every time the rivers flow, they exceed the Arizona maximum allowable limits on gross alpha and beta radiation by over 100 times," Gray said in an interview.

Alpha is a high-energy, low-penetration radiation that can be stopped by skin, whereas beta radiation can penetrate several inches. Their chief danger comes from being ingested, Gray explained. "You don't want to breathe, eat or drink them" so that they get into vital organs and bone marrow, he said.

Among the radioactive materials being found in the river sediment are isotopes of thorium, radium and uranium. Thorium-230 has been connected with lymphatic system ailments, including cancers, and radium is a known carcinogen. Uranium is highly toxic, affecting the kidneys and liver.

The USGS plans to determine where the radioactivity came from by dating sediments, evaluating flood deposits and taking ratios of isotopes. "We believe a lot of the clues are out there," Gray said.

Both New Mexico and Arizona are contributing money to the study, and Arizona

water officials are outspoken in their concerns about the Puerco, which flows into the Little Colorado in their state. "We've had continuous violations of state water quality standards since the spill," said Ed Swanson, program manager for surface water quality in the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. The residues of radioactive particles and toxic elements are working their way down the river channel, he said in an interview.

The USGS study will help "define the problem in a scientifically defensible manner," Swanson says. "Then we can develop controls to deal with it."

Other than monitoring by the USGS and the Southwest Research and Information Center, the Puerco Navajos have received little help with their water problems. They live on the eastern edge of the vast Navajo nation, in a region known as the "checkerboard" because land is split into parcels owned alternately by the tribe, New Mexico and the federal government.

Some say they are considered a marginal part of the reservation because of this land ownership arrangement. The tribal government, beset with a leadership crisis, has been unresponsive to their requests for a public water supply, according to Ray Morgan of Southwest Research.

For the past 10 years, the Navajos of the Puerco have tried to cope with a situation many feel confused about. Donna Deyhle, an anthropologist writing in the May 19, 1982, issue of *Century* magazine, noted that instead of blaming their prob-

lems on the mining industry, many older Navajos instead blamed themselves for allowing their land to be desecrated. She wrote: "This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Church Rock spill, that elderly Navajos feel guilty and assume the blame for a situation totally beyond their control."

"Some people are still reluctant to talk about the spill because they lost livestock that was their livelihood," said Morgan. "They're more emotionally attached to their animals than white people are."

But a change in attitude may have begun. Southwest Research has been conducting an education project among the Puerco Navajos for the past five years, working with residents and community leaders on water quality concerns.

At the July 16 commemoration, these Puerco residents announced the formation of the Puerco Valley Navajo Clean Water Association. The event was a day of socializing, dancing and grass-roots politicking over clean water. The association plans next to start lobbying tribal and state government officials for a public water supply.

"People affected are now realizing that they would like to take this action and keep this as a public issue," said Jimson Joe, a co-chairman of the association. "Navajos were never taught what the results [of mining] would be. We rely on water, on our sheep, horses and cows. It's our basic livelihood."

—R.G.



By Salim Muwakkil

**J**ESSE JACKSON'S RECENT MOVE TO WASHINGTON, D.C., was yet another step along the political tightrope he's been walking most of his public life. Hanging in the balance, as usual, is his credibility.

He risks rejection and ridicule if he campaigns to succeed beleaguered D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and loses. If he wins, Jackson risks his beloved itinerancy and freelance political prerogatives. And if he doesn't run for mayor, he risks fueling speculation that he was chased from Chicago because recent election results—in which his candidates lost—showcased his political vulnerabilities.

With his pingpong shifts of headquarters from Washington to Chicago and back again, Jackson also risks alienating those members of the National Rainbow Coalition (NRC) who finally may be tiring of his caprices. Running a campaign for mayor of Washington, D.C., is nowhere in the NRC's list of agenda items, but many members fear the organization again will be preoccupied by yet another of Jackson's electoral efforts.

And even members who favor a D.C. mayoral run are angered that Jackson has made few attempts to fill them in on his intentions. "Jesse treats members of the Rainbow just like the Democratic Party treats African-American voters: he takes us for granted," said one disgruntled NRC official.

**Rainbow blues:** But this is old news. Since an NRC board meeting last March approved structural realignments, the group has been moving further away from membership empowerment and from holding leaders accountable. More and more the organization reflects the personal choices of Jackson, and the March meeting forged a restructuring that eliminates even the pretense of member democracy. Instead, the board instituted a conventional top-down alignment that allows the national president to appoint most of the NRC's leaders.

"From the reports I hear, many people are upset about the content of the [March] decisions and trying to sort out what it will mean for their local work," wrote NRC board member Leslie Cagan in the May 1989 edition of *Zeta* magazine. "Commitments to Jesse Jackson and his presidential efforts are being weighed against commitments to building a mass membership organization where people can play an active role in setting the agenda and doing the work."

Not everyone is unhappy with the direction Jackson and the Rainbow seem to be taking, however. Some NRC supporters welcome the two-time presidential candidate's move to Washington as part of a natural evolution. "Jesse has to grow and reach out to other people, and we who respect him and understand his gifts must allow him that freedom," explained Robert Starks, a Chicago organizer and Jackson confidant.

Echoing and amplifying that view is Ron Daniels, who, as former NRC executive director, also has worked closely with Jackson. "As Jesse continues to look at expanding his base," Daniels noted, "several things are required. First, he needs to address the lingering question about his lack of government experience, and a term as mayor in the capital city would take care of that. And, even if he doesn't run, his relocation to D.C.—a media center and a major stop for international leadership—strikes me as an excellent move."

In Daniels' view, Jackson has one more credible shot at the presidency, and that should wait until 1996. "I don't think it's tac-



Jesse Jackson's big move: inside the beltway but out of the loop.

## POLITICS

# Is Jesse running? No, he's just walking the tightrope

tically wise to run for president in 1992; history teaches us that incumbents are extremely difficult to dislodge," he said. "I think Jesse should take the time to build a record based on effective public policy service."

And, Daniels added, as mayor of D.C., Jackson's stature would attract extraordinary talent to his administration and, with the world watching, allow him to make a positive difference.

**Joy in the mainstream:** Despite those expressions of support, it's safe to say that most of Jackson's left constituency is decidedly uneasy about his new directions. Mainstream pundits, on the other hand, seem absolutely entranced by the possibilities. Perhaps the biggest booster of a Jackson candidacy are prominent Democrats. And why not? After all, a D.C. mayoral campaign would take the pesky Jackson out of the presidential sweepstakes and allow the party to field candidates without his distorting influence.

Ever astute, Jackson's coy denials of mayoral aspirations seem designed to manipulate the party's anxiety about his intentions. "I have been trying to move to Washington, D.C., since 1984," he joked in response to a reporter's question at a recent news conference. "I was hoping to get to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, but surely it's progress to get to 16th Street, where we're moving."

Although Jackson said he was moving for the sake of the NRC, he occasionally hinted that he has more in mind. "The Rainbow will be far more effective with its base of operations in the nation's capital," he explained. But he added, "If we cannot save our children, build good schools, safe streets and a thriving economy in Washington, D.C., there is no hope for urban America."

Yet even as speculation increases that

Jackson is readying himself for a mayoral run, he is putting the finishing touches on the Keep Hope Alive political action committee (PAC) he created after his 1988 campaign to help finance future candidacies. Indeed, the Jackson forces have learned much about fundraising techniques since their candidate's initial run in 1984. According to a story in the September edition of *Chicago* magazine, the campaign was raising nearly \$800,000 a month by March 1988—an amount more than four times the 1984 rate.

**Jesse, call home:** The Jackson faction's increased focus on sophisticated fundraising techniques and other mainstream pursuits have provoked growing concern that Jack-

## Jackson has moved his base to Washington. But is he getting closer to the White House or to the D.C. mayor's office?

son himself is deserting the activist causes of his civil rights roots. "The rumor of the corporate sellout Jesse Jackson is an old one that gets trotted out every time he notches up his level of expertise," Starks explained.

But complaints about Jackson's unilateral decision-making and lack of accountability are becoming too numerous to dismiss. Although most NRC members are slow to criticize a man they still hold in high esteem, harsh appraisals of Jackson are more commonplace these days.

"We haven't heard anything from the national office, so we really don't know what's

going on," said Liz Blum, co-chair of the Vermont Rainbow Coalition, one of the country's most active NRC chapters. "The things that I've heard and read about Jesse's activities—lending support to various labor actions around the country—have been wonderful, but I only know about them through the media. In our state there is an incredible amount of interest in Jackson's activities in the name of the NRC, but we don't know what's up. They don't stay in touch."

Blum said the national office could expand its scope if it more regularly focused on issues of local import. "For example, we're in a big struggle over the economic and ecological implications of bovine growth hormone, a genetically engineered product that is being pushed by chemical companies as a boon to beef and milk production. If Jesse would speak out on this issue, his national visibility would raise the level of debate." As it is, Blum complained, "we haven't had an opportunity to even discuss this with the Rainbow's national leadership."

Like many NRC members, Blum is not anxious to hurl blanket criticisms at Jackson. She credits him with moving the left agenda forward in this country. Still, she said the NRC is squandering an ideal opportunity to build on the strength of the 1988 campaign and may be left out in the process. "Unfortunately, Jackson is giving the impression that he is ignoring the left," Blum said. "We were the troops of his campaign, and now it seems he doesn't need us. Consequently, I'm hearing more talk about a third-party movement."

But Jackson's top advisers have calculated the options and decided that the risk of left defections is a small one. "Many of those protesting Jesse's mainstreaming moves are people who think that marginality is a value in itself," said Daniels, the former NRC director. "They are wrong, of course."

Jackson has spent most of his years in the political margins, and there's little doubt he much prefers action in the mainstream. But his walk along the political high wire between left activism and mainstream sophistication shows he still likes to hedge his bets. □

IN THESE TIMES SEPTEMBER 13-19, 1989 7



By Katharine Greider

**B**ACK IN 1974, PILOT MICHAEL STEWARTT flew a group of newspeople over southern Utah. They soared over the majesty of the Grand Canyon and the rich green areas of southern Utah preserved by the U.S. government. But Stewartt especially wanted the journalists to see what was nestled on the Kaiparowits Plateau, the site of a proposed coal-fired power plant.

The striking photographs and stories generated by the flight persuaded local citizens to fight the power plant. The citizens won, pressuring a consortium of power companies to scrap the plan. "That experience," says Stewartt, "bore out my gut feeling that environmentalism needed high-caliber flying."

Project LightHawk was born.

Government and industry have long had access to the power of aviation, which lays at their feet remote areas it took pioneers months to reach. But until Project LightHawk, a less monied group—conservationists—had to travel more like pioneers. With the help of membership fees, donations and foundation grants, this non-profit organization offers flight to environmentalists for the price of fuel. It saves them time and money in a field where time is of the essence and money is scarce.

LightHawk owns two Cessna 210s and has two staff pilots, Stewartt and Bruce Gordon, plus 25 pilots who volunteer their time and the use of their planes. In all, "the wings of conservation" flew 750 hours last year. During the busy months of spring and summer, the project receives about 10 requests a week, fulfilling virtually all of them.

# Pilots' project gives conservationists wings

Stewartt believes that people will not be motivated to preserve the natural environments that are our common inheritance until they are allowed to see them with their own eyes. "Until you can get out and hear a wolf howl, you're probably not going to be too interested in wolf reintroduction [to the wild]." Since LightHawk can't take everyone

## ENVIRONMENT

up, it concentrates on flying those who are in a position to share their experience with a wide audience—mainly journalists—or to make decisions concerning the environment—mainly politicians.

The Phelps-Dodge copper smelter in Douglas, Ariz., met a fate similar to that of the proposed Kaiparowits plant because of LightHawk's collaborative efforts with the Environmental Defense Fund and other groups. LightHawk flights stimulated extensive media coverage of the smelter, which was a major contributor to acid rain. "What LightHawk did," says pilot Bruce Gordon, "was to dramatize the smelter's pollution by taking people up and having them choke, cough and see a trail of smoke that stretched for 200 miles." In 1987 the smelter was closed under the weight of public protest.

During the sizzling summer of 1988, Gordon invited journalists to fly over the fires

then raging in Yellowstone National Park. This time, rather than amplify press reaction to the fires, LightHawk sought to diminish "all the hype" surrounding them. Gordon says the media had presented the situation as catastrophic, making it difficult for officials to evaluate the pros and cons of the "let burn" policy. He wanted to show that most of the park remained intact.

**See and sell:** When Victoria, British Columbia, alderwoman Janet Baird got a bird's-eye view of deforestation on Victoria Island, she decided to sell her shares in the timber company Fletcher Challenge Canada. "Seeing bald mountain tops on such steep slopes and the amount of wood left behind astounded me," she told the *Vancouver Sun*. "I'm just reacting as a person who doesn't like waste and wants sustainable growth."

## When one alderwoman got a bird's-eye view of deforestation, she sold her timber company stock.

She said she would push for forest management reform in Canada. LightHawk hopes to elicit similar reactions soon from a group of U.S. congresspeople when Stewartt leases a twin-engine plane to fly them over virgin forests in the American West.

These trees are at the center of one of LightHawk's most controversial undertakings (see story, page 12). In some circles the debate over harvesting America's ancient forests has reached a fever pitch. But the issue has been obscured in the eyes of the American public by concern about deforestation in Latin America. Often overlooked is the fact that the razing of U.S. forests also exacerbates the greenhouse effect, threatening the global environment. University of Pennsylvania biologist Daniel Janzen has compared the destruction of tropical rain forests to burning down the world's libraries without knowing what they contain, referring to the rain forests' many unknown plant and animal

species. He says the destruction of the U.S.'s temperate rain forests is closer to heading straight for the rare books section and setting it ablaze. In the Pacific Northwest, "we have a much better idea of what we are destroying," he says.

Armed with a decade of experience and a healthy awareness of the U.S.'s own environmental problems, LightHawk began flying in Central America three years ago. The project has been a boon to Janzen's efforts to restore Costa Rica's tropical dry forest. Flying over the extreme northwestern area of the country, Janzen was able to document how much of the forest, now protected by the Costa Rican government, remains intact. He says the specialized skills of LightHawk pilots enabled him to do in one day what might otherwise have taken months or years.

"They're extremely competent at putting you in a particular place in the air and holding you there," he says. Chartering a commercial plane in Costa Rica would have cost Janzen thousands of dollars: LightHawk provided its expertise for free. Next year LightHawk will fly to Southeast Asia for the first time, working with existing environmental groups and government officials to help in Malaysia's conservationist efforts.

**Political flight:** LightHawk's campaigns to take journalists and politicians to the front lines of environmental battle zones are unabashedly political—"giving the land a voice" is how Gordon describes it. But the project also takes up less prominent, more methodical conservationist projects. Last winter LightHawk transported otters from the rivers of Oregon to those of Colorado, where they once lived in large numbers. In August endangered thick-billed parrots siezed from pet smugglers in McAllen, Texas, were ferried to El Paso for eventual release in Arizona.

Gordon has a particular affection for the wolf, which he calls "the epitome of wilderness." Four years in a row he has flown for the University of Montana's Wolf Ecology Project, tracking wolves near Glacier Park, where Montana meets Canada.

"The majority of work we do is to get people to see with their own eyes," says Stewartt. Last year, he flew over Belize with Dean Lindo, the country's minister of agriculture. Until that flight, Lindo had never seen about a third of his own country. When Stewartt tells this to Americans, they are often astonished. This strikes Stewartt as ironic; after all, how many U.S. leaders have seen America? □

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By Pippa Green

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**T**HE DAY BEFORE THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS, about 400 black workers and 300 white students spilled out of a meeting at the University of Stellenbosch and set off at a trot through the streets of this well-preserved Afrikaner settler town about 40 miles from Cape Town.

The front line of marchers, including a black clergyman, held a banner that read in Afrikaans, *Voorwaards met die werkersstryd* (Forward with the workers' struggle). They softly chanted the refrain of a Xhosa freedom song, *Vulela Mandela* (Free Mandela), as they wended their way through this predominantly university and winegrowing town set in a valley at the foot of the beautiful Western Cape mountains. White Afrikaners—many of them office workers returning from lunch—stopped and gasped in amazement at the sight of black cleaning ladies in their mustard-colored uniforms, black men in overalls and Afrikaans-speaking students striding defiantly into the center of a town long considered the intellectual heart of Afrikanerdom.

When the demonstrators reached a large grassy square known as *Die Braak*, they came face to face with a contingent of South African riot police armed with whips. But it was the police dogs that panicked the demonstrators. They had known they would be arrested: the four-year-old state of emergency makes any outdoor political protest illegal, and even under "normal" security legislation the police can ban demonstrations. But the dogs, straining on their leashes, sent the front row stumbling backward. Those behind turned and fled as the police set upon the demonstrators with whips. First to be shoved into a police van, with a dog snarling at his legs, was World Television News cameraman James Mitchell. Next was a prominent student leader, Leslee Durr, who earlier this year was suspended by the University of Stellenbosch, an institution that has produced many past leaders of the ruling National Party. Then the police dragged another 30 or so students and workers toward the trucks. Some were still brave enough to protest. "This land is not only yours," screamed one student in Afrikaans as a policeman pushed her into a windowless compartment of the truck.

That angry, desperate shout is at the heart of a concerted campaign to defy apartheid. The campaign has invoked severe police reaction. But it has also weighed heavily on the already pressured Pretoria government and will have crucial effects on this country's political course.

The September 6 elections, in which parties to the right and the left cut deeply into the parliamentary majority of the ruling Nationalists, is an indication of the growing polarization within the white minority. But the toll of a dozen or more dead and many injured in demonstrations on election day is yet another bloody proof that the central issue of apartheid will be decided in the streets and not in the voting booths.

That issue is the exclusion of 73 percent of the population from the vote. The African majority cannot vote for the tricameral Parliament, and most of those classified "colored" (mixed race) or Indian under South African law refuse to vote for "their" segregated, inferior chambers. For every two colored seats and one Indian seat there are

## Defiance alliance provokes police, pressures Pretoria

four white seats. Although new National Party leader F.W. de Klerk has been promoted as a "reformer" by some Western leaders, he is still wedded to the idea of "group rights," a euphemism for white privilege.

De Klerk has promised eventual limited black participation in Parliament. He reportedly told British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that after the election he will re-

### SOUTH AFRICA

lease jailed African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela. But he has not talked to the 700 or more leaders of the legal anti-apartheid groups here who were heavily restricted after their release from prison (where they had been held without trial) earlier this year, nor has he allowed internal anti-apartheid groups such as the non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) to function politically. His government has also defended laws upholding segregation on beaches, in hospitals, on public transport and in schools.

**Defiance alliance:** The anti-apartheid groupings here, now known as the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), a deliberately loose label designed to circumvent political restrictions on the UDF and the black labor federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), launched the Defiance Campaign to publicly test the extent of de Klerk's "reformism." Since August 2, black patients have presented themselves at whites-only hospitals for treatment; multiracial groups of picnickers have tried to use whites-only beaches in the Western Cape and in the Indian Ocean town of Durban. In Cape Town, 21 political activists, who are among the 700 aforementioned leaders subject to strict curfews and may not attend political gatherings, have openly defied their restrictions. Church leaders, including the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and World Alliance of Reformed Churches President Allan Boesak, have led illegal protests through downtown Cape Town: university students around the country have demonstrated; and black commuters have tried to board whites-only buses in Pretoria.

The police first responded to demonstrators in a cool—sometimes even courteous—way. For instance, when black patients went to white hospitals in Durban and Johannesburg, and when Tutu, Boesak and other clerics and academics staged an illegal placard protest on August 8 on the steps of Cape Town's Anglican cathedral, the only police present were a video crew who filmed the "defiers." On another occasion policewomen stopped a march led by Tutu, pleaded with him "to go back to his car," then gently led him and other marchers back to the cathedral.

But the police, accustomed to the range of arbitrary powers they enjoy under the state of emergency, have quickly turned to harsher tactics, particularly in Cape Town, the epicenter of the campaign. The night before the Stellenbosch march, police used Casspirs—armored troop carriers—to bar-

ricade a church where a Boesak-led prayer service was to have been held.

When the meeting was hurriedly replaced by an evening prayer service, police prohibited that too. They surrounded the Methodist church in the city center and arrested Boesak, the pastor Rev. Jackie Jooste and two others. Church lawyers made an urgent application to the Supreme Court to allow the service. As the would-be congregation waited quietly on street corners and in parked cars for the lawyers to return, riot police armed with whips leapt from police vans and whipped anyone on the street.

Neither children nor women were exempt

### On one hand, de Klerk faces an ailing economy subject to international pressure; on the other, his own right wing.

from what a seasoned South African journalist described as the "most gratuitous" violence he has seen. Reporters saw a boy of no more than 14 set upon by two policemen and whipped, though he was several blocks from the church.

Later that evening, police stopped Colin Jones, the Anglican dean of Cape Town, from entering his own cathedral, where he was to attend a university choir concert, and arrested Tutu and members of his staff as they made their way from the cathedral to the nearby Methodist church.

Boesak, Tutu and the other clerics were released later that night. The next day, Boesak said it was impossible "to underestimate the importance of what has happened: I was arrested because I wanted to attend a church service to do the Scripture readings.

I was taken, not to Caledon Square [Cape Town's police headquarters directly opposite the Methodist church], but to a vast, isolated building in the Cape Town docks and kept there until 11:20 p.m. Never before have I really had reason to fear for my life in police custody, but this time I did. I was simply left to walk back to town from the docks [through a dangerous area] with a police van hovering in the background."

**Cape crusade:** Other activists are still in jail, among them the Johannesburg-based UDF leaders Curnick Ndlovhu and Mohammed Valli and two of the Cape Town "restrictees" who defied their curfews. Trevor Manuel and Willie Hofmeyr. Both are on hunger strikes. Manuel, who has been in jail for 28 of the last 36 months without being charged with any offense, has been moved to a prison in Bloemfontein, 800 miles from his home.

In addition to victimizing particular activists, the police have tried to intimidate the general population, particularly in Cape Town, where, as Boesak puts it, "the campaign is staying more persistently than anywhere else." In the past week, more than 1,000 demonstrators and bystanders—academics, clerics, journalists and activists—have been arrested in downtown Cape Town. On September 2 police arrested at least 500 demonstrators led by Boesak who were staging a peaceful protest against the minority elections. Riot police turned a water cannon on protesters, drenching them with purple dye, and tear-gassed, whipped and beat unarmed people who cowered against the walls of buildings. They detained 52 journalists. Hours after the protest had been forcibly ended, the police rounded up anyone who bore the telltale traces of purple dye.

Battles like these have not only overshadowed the elections, they have highlighted the dilemma the de Klerk government faces: on the one hand, there is an ailing economy, particularly susceptible to international pressure; on the other, there are forces to his right, both in the Conservative Party, his electoral opposition, and deep in the ranks of the security apparatus.

The Achilles heel for white minority rule

Continued on page 22



Mannenberg township residents flee tear gas as South African police disperse protests against whites-only elections.



By John Colmey

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

**D**RIVING THROUGH THE OUTSKIRTS OF THIS capital city two weeks ago, Police Constable Lal Perera hit a small bump in the road. He died instantly when the bump turned out to be a 20-pound claymore mine.

The next morning, according to area residents, the Sri Lankan army brought 15 young men, suspected leftist insurgents, to the same spot. They lined the boys up around the crater left by the blast and shot them one by one in the back of the head; their bodies fell into the pit. The patrol threw tires and plastic utensils on the pile of corpses and set it ablaze. The smell of burning flesh filled the air for most of the morning.

One hundred and twenty miles south, in a small Sri Lankan village, 33 men and women, including a local medicine man, gathered in the home of an ill man for a devil dance, a Sri Lankan ritual to drive away evil spirits or illness. Shortly after midnight an army patrol surrounded the house. Those inside turned the lights off and huddled in fear. The patrol opened fire, killing 14 and wounding 19. The newspapers reported that the dead were hard-core subversives. But according to survivors, those inside had no weapons.

These victims are just a few of the hundreds killed during the last three weeks in southern Sri Lanka. Travelers find bodies everywhere—washed up on the beaches, lying beside main roads, floating down the rivers. "We hear the shots at night," said a young woman outside Kandy, "and find the dead bodies in the morning."

In the past three months more civilians have been killed or reported missing—estimates range as high as 4,000—than in the last nine months in Beirut. Human rights lawyers said another 10,000 are being held in hotels, universities and sports stadiums now being used as makeshift internment camps. Under state of emergency regulations in effect since June, suspects can be held indefinitely.

The dead are victims of a spiraling duet of death. It pits the Sri Lanka security forces, including government-supported hit squads, against the People's Liberation Front, or JVP, a Marxist-inspired insurgency trying to topple the government. Human rights workers believe the government is pursuing an unofficial policy to eliminate an estimated 4,000 hard-core JVP members before the middle of the month. Last week Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa announced he would hold a peace conference on September 13 to end the crisis. Analysts say the current military operation is intended to force the insurgents to the conference.

Sri Lanka, formerly called Ceylon, a small Indian Ocean island long treasured by Europeans for its beautiful beaches, tropical climate and friendly people, and one of the region's oldest democracies (see accompanying story), has become Asia's new "killing fields."

**The Indian factor:** According to Dinesh Gunawardne, an opposition member of Parliament, the current instability is a direct result of India's intervention in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern regions, where the minority Tamil population has fought an eight-year battle to create a separate Tamil state. Indian troops were invited by former President J.R. Jayewardene, as stipulated in a peace accord signed between the two countries on July 29, 1987. The Indian army, which was expected to oversee a cessation of the conflict through provincial elections, now has an estimated 50,000 troops on the

10 IN THESE TIMES, SEPTEMBER 13-19, 1989



Army guarding a private bus 30 minutes after it was burned by the JVP in Colombo. The driver was killed: the penalty for driving a bus during a JVP work stoppage.

## Government, guerrillas locked in duet of death

island and has lost nearly 1,000 men in the continued fighting.

Many Sri Lankans accuse Jayewardene of selling out. They believe India wants to take over the rest of the country, and that the accord is only the first step. Jayewardene now

### SRI LANKA

admits he had other reasons for inviting the Indians, not the least of which was to free up Sri Lanka's troops to counter the rising JVP strength in the south.

Yet few here expect the current crisis would go away if the Indians withdrew. The accord—and the anti-Indian baggage it carries with it—has been an easy issue for the extremely nationalist JVP to exploit. The JVP movement, however, dates back to the late '60s. Since then the JVP's support has grown due to government suppression of trade unions, the extreme income gap between the rich and poor—second only to Brazil, according to the monthly *Economic Review*—and the clash between a highly literate population and high unemployment. "The battle lines are drawn between urban elite and rural peoples, between aging politicians and a frustrated youth," a minister told *In These Times*.

The highly organized JVP is reportedly controlled by Rohana Wijeweera. Wijeweera, called an intellectual and gifted orator by some and a megalomaniac by others, attended Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University in the early '60s, but was expelled because of his outspoken preference for the

Maoist line. He formed the JVP in 1967 after he broke ranks with the Ceylon Communist Party.

Yet sources close to the party insist the JVP is not communist but merely leftist and ultranationalist. In a national newspaper last November, Wijeweera railed against "the Indian imperialist ... anti-popular tactics, the government's despotism ... and the fact that the state has prevented the people from fighting its actions through democratic means." He also talked of a "pure democracy and socialism that will protect the freedom, independence, sovereignty and integrity of the nation." Even Colombo's intellectuals who have studied JVP leaflets and illegal radio broadcasts say they have trouble pinning down the JVP's ideology.

In 1971 the JVP staged an abortive over-

throw of the government, which was then in the hands of the nominally leftist Sri Lanka Freedom Party. An estimated 10,000 were killed in the attempt, and most of the JVP's leaders were jailed. They were later released, however, and briefly allowed to operate freely as a party. In the 1982 presidential election against Jayewardene, Wijeweera received 400,000 votes. But the party was banned in 1983 when it was blamed for the anti-Tamil riots that left more than 1,000 dead.

This time the leftists have remained underground. The JVP holds illegal "education classes" under guard in forest clearings and has gradually rebuilt its organization and support among the rural poor, university students, Buddhist monks and the intelligentsia. One source close to the party says the estimate of 4,000 committed supporters is probably too low and that 50,000 is probably more accurate.

In the two years since the accord, the JVP presence has grown more obvious as it has ruthlessly applied its somewhat bizarre philosophy on southern and, more recently, western and central villages and towns. Criminals—cattle rustlers, drug dealers,



Translation: "Killing the army families, kidnapping, setting fire to their houses; for these destructions, JVPers remember: we will do the same to you at a ratio of one to 100—i.e., one family to 100 families."



rapists—are either murdered or captured during the night and left for the police to collect in the morning. The party reportedly frowns on excessive drinking and smoking. Rumors abound that punishment for smoking is a cut lip. Anyone driving a Mercedes or other “luxury” car is branded an enemy of the people. One man said he was told, while waiting at a railroad crossing, to turn his car’s air conditioner off, or else. “What gives you the right to be cool while the people live in heat?” the boy reportedly asked him.

To acquire arms, the leftists raid police stations and army camps, and, after acquiring an official list of gun owners, rob them one by one. They rob government banks, post offices, money lenders and wealthy villagers and collect duty from shop owners. Dr. Mahinda Abeysekera, a general practitioner in Matale, a JVP stronghold in the south, said the “boys,” as sympathetic locals call party cadres, showed up at his house one night and demanded that he withdraw \$3,000 from his bank account. When he balked at the sum, the group referred to account records, which they had illegally obtained from his bank. He came up with the money.

The insurgents have also carried out a systematic campaign to wipe out government supporters, particularly those of the ruling United National Party (UNP), as well as policemen and virtually anyone else who opposes the JVP. It has killed more than 1,000 UNP supporters and politicians so far this year.

But perhaps the insurgents’ most effective ploy is the imposition of nationwide hartals—work-stoppage protests perfected by Mahatma Gandhi. Hartals, now occurring weekly, are announced by word of mouth and through JVP posters pasted up at bus stations across the country. Those who dare to work, drive private cars or purchase goods during the hartals are regularly punished. Sometimes their shops are burned. Under state of emergency regulations, anyone caught putting up posters can be shot on the spot, and several violators have been killed. After shop owners started spreading rumors of hartals to exploit the panic buying that precedes them, the JVP said it would kill rumormongers as well. After a laborer named Mahinda recently forced his way into a closed shop to buy rice, he was ordered by the JVP to carry through the middle of the local marketplace a party poster announcing his crime. He was promptly gunned down by an army patrol.

The work stoppages have become increasingly effective. The JVP was able to paralyze the nation’s transportation system with a month-long bus strike in July. Then in August it closed Colombo’s hospitals for 10 days after the security forces arrested two employees for putting up JVP posters in an infirmary.

**Battle lines:** When President Premadasa was elected last December, many Sri Lankans believed he would bring the situation under control. As prime minister under the previous government, Premadasa boycotted the signing of the accord, and he campaigned on the promise to push the Indians out. He also promised to lift the state of emergency then in force and to undertake an ambitious anti-poverty program. Shortly after the election (now being contested in court by the opposition because of bombings and mass intimidation of voters by UNP supporters), Premadasa released 1,800 alleged JVP members then in custody.

But while the president made peace over-

tures, his party members were gearing up for battle. In a curious move, the security forces gave guns to candidates for the parliamentary elections held in February, supposedly to defend themselves against the insurgents. One opposition member of Parliament said he received two shotguns, two rifles, a pistol and a hand grenade. The UNP candidates, he said, received an even greater arsenal, including machine guns and automatic weapons. Human rights lawyers said some candidates received as many as 200 weapons. The killings in the south skyrocketed shortly after the elections, and the situation has deteriorated quickly since then.

Over the summer Premadasa’s government’s credibility has crumbled. Nearly every promise has fallen through. Premadasa’s surprise unilateral demand in late June for a total Indian withdrawal by July 29, the second anniversary of the accord, backfired when India’s President Rajiv Gandhi refused. Gandhi, who faces re-election next year, couldn’t afford to appear weak, especially in the eyes of southern India’s 60 million Tamils. After tense negotiations, Gandhi agreed to withdraw 500 troops per month—not enough to please most Sri Lankans.

The economy is near collapse. JVP work stoppages have brought production to a standstill. GNP growth has fallen from 6 percent in 1987 to estimates of less than 5 percent this year. Inflation in rural areas is running as high as 75 percent, according to the *Economic Review*. Development projects have stopped all over the country. Tourism has plummeted. And by pushing ahead with

various anti-poverty programs—including an ill-fated plan to give unemployed workers a welfare package amounting to twice the average worker’s income—the president has nearly doubled the deficit in the past six months, with some help from a ballooning military budget.

The state of emergency was lifted briefly, then reimposed in late June. The country has been under nightly curfew for two months. The judicial system has hit “rock bottom,” said Parakrama Ranasinghe, a lawyer in Kandy. He said courts are often closed and regular offenses are not being prosecuted. Police told one Colombo woman whose house was robbed by bandits to tell the JVP by placing a poster outside her house. “They’re the only ones who can help you now,” the policeman reportedly told her.

More importantly, people live in fear, particularly those in rural areas. Streets are deserted after dark. All it takes to get arrested—or worse—is a secret petition to the local police station. This has opened the door to private vendettas.

Universities have been closed for two years. The lines of people waiting to apply for exit visas and emigration papers at the various embassies in Colombo grow longer every day. And two weeks ago the opposition in Parliament called for the president to step down and form a national government.

**The poster war:** In early September Prins Gunasekara, a prominent human rights lawyer, filed his 443rd habeas corpus application for 1989, nearly double the number of 1987. He believes those numbers represent a small fraction of the total. “The situation has sharply

deteriorated in the past two weeks,” said Gunasekara, “and it’s getting worse.”

The escalation came in response to the JVP’s latest—and some say misguided—threat in what many now call “the poster war.”

“We will kill the families of the armed forces or police who do not resign their posts by August 20,” read the posters that went up in mid-August. The security forces panicked. The next day the government responded with its own posters and banners, which read, “For every family member killed by the JVP, we will kill 27 families of the JVP—[signed] the armed forces.” The government-backed hit squads, which go by names like “Yellow Cats,” “Black Cats” and “Green Tigers,” put up posters of their own that threaten even more deaths.

They mean business. Since August 20 there have been at least five confirmed army massacres. “It’s appalling,” said Gunasekara. “It’s as if the government has lost control of the security forces.” He said that until recently the hit squads, which are widely recognized to be directed by UNP members of Parliament and candidates who earlier received arms, were responsible for most of the atrocities.

But on August 22 the government announced a new campaign to eliminate the JVP. “We will pursue the JVP insurgents relentlessly,” Deputy Minister of Defense Ranjan Wijeratne told the Parliament. “It’s inevitable that innocent people will be caught in the cross fire.”

The government operation now underway works something like a cluster bomb. If the security forces arrest 50 suspects, they presume at least 10 are JVP members. Thus, according to this logic, if they kill 10 people, they’re sure to have killed at least one JVP member.

Opinions here differ about the campaign’s effectiveness so far. One member of Parliament said he thinks the forces have taken out 60 percent of the hard-core JVP members in his district. A student in close contact with the JVP said that only the lower-level members, runners and messengers are being hit and the rest are innocent bystanders. If the news reports are accurate, the number of small arms captured by the forces is increasing. And, as a Colombo professor said, “with every gun goes a guerrilla.”

One innocent person killed last week was human rights lawyer Kanchana Abhayapala, the fourth lawyer gunned down this year for filing habeas corpus applications. Death threats have also been issued to Gunasekara, who is now in hiding, as well as to a member of Parliament heading a special commission to investigate human rights and several others.

With the small team of human rights workers out of the way, the government has a free hand to complete the operation. The press is heavily censored by the government and gives scant coverage to killings of suspected JVP members. Amnesty International is banned from Sri Lanka, and appeals by the opposition to the United Nations’ Commission on Human Rights and the Red Cross have so far gone unanswered.

The last chance rests on the president’s call for the September 13 conference of all political parties—including the JVP. Premadasa said he will consider all proposals presented at the conference, presumably even stepping down. But if party leaders fail in their quest for peace, hundreds more will likely die in the weeks ahead. □

John Colmey is on assignment in Asia for *IN These Times*.

## Before the troubles, a thriving island nation

Lying by the pool at a hotel in downtown Colombo, David Sinclair, an engineer from London, sipped a gin and tonic and reminisced about better times. “The whole thing is amazing. When I came here in 1982, I couldn’t find a room for less than 40 quid [\$80], and all these places were packed,” he said, pointing down the beach at the other hotels. “Now I’m paying 20 quid for the same room. The place is empty.”

“Sri Lanka is a wonderful country,” said his companion. “The people are lovely. It’s hard to believe the country could sink so fast.”

Few Americans ever stray as far as Sri Lanka. But those who do are similarly shocked at the current situation. In 1983, before war erupted in the country’s north and east, Sri Lanka was, in development terms, one of the most promising countries in Asia. Many thought it would join the ranks of Thailand and other Pacific Rim countries.

Prior to the conflicts the economy was booming, and continued to grow at a rate twice that of the U.S. as late as 1986. Exports such as shirts for the Banana Republic chain, tea and gems were on the rise. The country had nearly achieved self-sufficiency in rice production, the mainstay of the country’s diet.

The island’s 90 percent literacy rate is second in the region only to Japan, according to Hema Goonatillake, a professor in Colombo. Population growth is stable, well below that of other developing countries, she said, and most of the population has access to good medical care; the average male lifespan is 70 years.

Goonatillake said women have been active in the workplace for years—their

numbers in professional occupations is higher than in many Western countries. Women were given the right to vote more than 80 years ago. The former prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, now opposition leader in Parliament, was one of the world’s first women to lead a democratic nation.

The 16 million population is made up of Sinhalese (74 percent), Tamils (12 percent) and a mix of Moslems and Burghers (descendants of the Dutch). The Sinhalese came to the island from northern India nearly 2,500 years ago, about the time Buddha died. The Sinhalese embraced Buddhism, and the majority remain practicing Buddhists, as can be seen at temples in villages and towns throughout the country. The Tamils came to the island from Tamil Nadu in southern India.

Sri Lanka was invaded repeatedly by India, then, after the 16th century, by the Portuguese, Dutch and, finally, by the British, who colonized it. The British developed the tea industry—the island’s teas grown in the mountains of the central province are among the finest in the world—and coveted the island for the port of Trincomalee on the east coast, one of the world’s largest natural deep-water harbors.

Traveling through Sri Lanka’s villages today, visitors pass elephants carrying logs on the road, men with pet monkeys, monks in bright orange robes and farmers and their families working in the paddy fields that cover the island. Tropical forests ring with the sounds of exotic birds.

“God, I hate to leave,” said one woman, who is emigrating to Canada. —J.C.



# The Northwest's chainsaw massacre

By Robert Schaeffer

**N**orthwest woods are falling down, falling down. Trees on the west side of the Cascades, a volcanic mountain range that runs south from Canada to California, are being cut down faster than they can grow back. Timber harvests have reached all-time highs in recent years, and an increasing percentage of the harvest—one-third of it last year—is being shipped abroad, primarily to Japan.

Dwindling supplies and rising demand have increased the pressure to flatten forests. Although only about 5 percent of the primeval "old growth" forest remains uncut, private loggers and federal and state forestry officials are eager to level the residual groves of centuries-old, 300-foot-tall sequoia and pine.

Continued cutting of old-growth and second-growth timber on public and private lands is wreaking havoc on the region's ecology and economy. It has brought conflict between environmentalists and industrialists to a boil. Environmentalists have perched in trees to protest deforestation, while loggers have rallied in truck convoys to demonstrate against attempts to preserve old-growth forests. Lawsuits that would curtail logging of old growth are slogging through the courts, and legislation that would permit expanded logging on public lands is being contested in Congress.

Overcutting, and the acrimonious debate around it, is a product of the following government policies and industry practices:

- the U.S. Forest Service's longstanding commitment to keep timber supplies high and prices low, even if it means using public subsidies to sell its timber at prices that do not recover the government's cost of preparing it for sale;

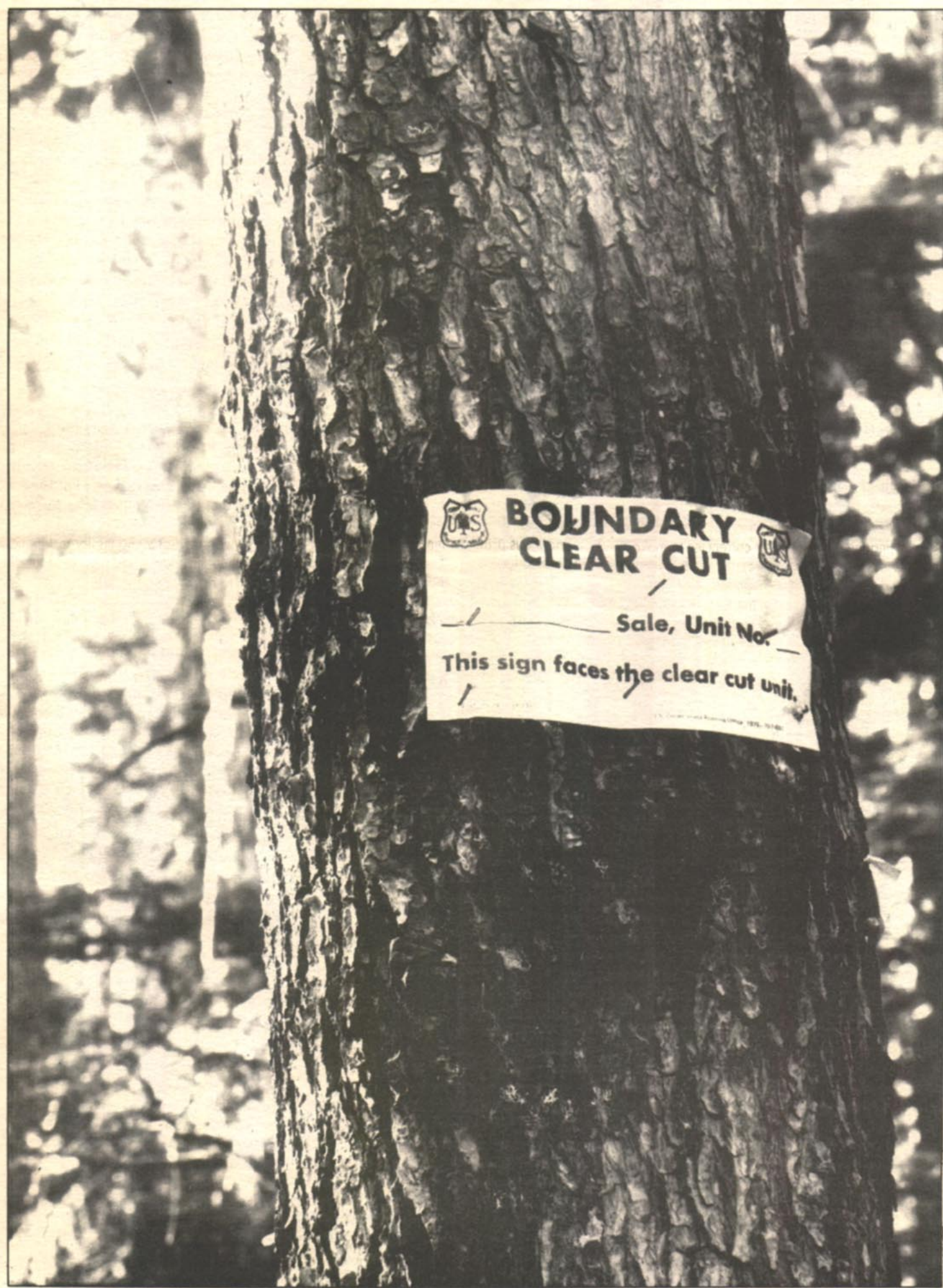
- the Treasury Department's 1985 decision to devalue the dollar and increase the value of Japanese and Western European currencies, which made Northwest timber available to foreign buyers at bargain-basement prices; and

- the timber industry's decision to take advantage of rising timber prices by speeding the liquidation of private holdings, which has increased demands for access to public timber, particularly high value, old-growth timber that survives in national forests.

**Sweet land of subsidy:** The Forest Service has long tried to keep timber supplies high and prices low by selling timber in national forests to private loggers. After World War II the Forest Service dramatically expanded its sale of public timber to ensure plentiful supplies to postwar homebuilders. Annual public timber sales more than doubled, from 5.6 billion to 12.8 billion board feet (a board foot is a one-foot by one-foot piece of wood that is one inch thick) between 1950 and 1968.

The Forest Service helps keep prices low by selling public timber in many parts of the country at prices that do not recover the government's cost of preparing it for sale. It does this both for economic and ideological reasons.

Much of the Forest Service's operating budget is derived from timber sales revenue. Because its revenue is based on an outdated and thus highly inappropriate policy based on volume rather than price of timber sales, it has an incentive to sell wood in quantity, which it can best do at low, below-market prices. Until recently, nobody much cared that the Forest Service lost between \$200 and \$700 million annually on timber sales. After all, the practice kept loggers cutting, mills humming and baby-boomers building.





But in the '80s, environmentalists discovered that the issue of Forest Service subsidies could be used to attack environmentally destructive forestry—the opening of wilderness areas to commercial logging, which destroys woods, streams and fisheries—as well as to garner support from Reagan-era legislators concerned about wasteful and inefficient bureaucracies. As Wilderness Society forester Peter Emerson said in 1986, “The below-cost sales and subsidy issue has been a way for the environmental camel to push his nose under the tent of public policy.”

The Forest Service has tried to defuse the below-cost sales issue by juggling its books. One recent strategy it has used is spreading the cost of building back-country roads over a long period of time so that each year's cost is relatively small. Wilderness Society economist Jeffrey Olson found that in Alaska, for instance, the service amortized some roads over 1,810 years; private companies amortize over 20 to 30 years. A particularly egregious example of Forest Service subsidy policy is its sale of timber from Alaska's Tongass forest, a temperate rain forest. There the Forest Service sells whole logs, worth \$300 elsewhere, for about \$2, the price of a hamburger.

Uneconomical Forest Service policies are buttressed by its view that the best forest is one that is cut regularly in 100-year rotations. Foresters typically regard old-growth timber as “decadent” or “overmature” and assiduously liquidate old-growth timber to make room for new, faster-growing trees. The service would prefer to manage relatively homogeneous, single-species, single-age tree plantations that support deer for hunters rather than diverse old-growth forests that support diverse and rare animal populations; the plantations are cheaper and easier to log.

Recently, forestry officials have even tried to enlist the greenhouse effect as reason to cut down old-growth forests. George Leonard, associate chief of the Forest Service, argued that “a young, growing forest is a more effective CO<sub>2</sub> [carbon dioxide] sink than an old-growth forest that is decaying.” Yet this argument is more than a little self-serving since old-growth forests still store huge amounts of carbon dioxide and the massive reforestation of lands now cleared of forests would do considerably more to slow the greenhouse effect than the deforestation and reforestation of remnant old-growth woods.

In general, public timber sales are constrained only by the Forest Service's “sustained yield” policy, which directs managers not to sell and cut trees faster than the trees grow back. But in practice, foresters tinker with the meaning of sustained yield and argue that it is O.K. to cut down centuries-old redwoods in Washington because they've got a new crop of young, fast-growing pine on a tree farm in Alabama. By juggling timber accounts, and by defining sustainability on a national instead of regional basis, the service permits timber to be cut at non-sustainable levels in the Northwest, aware that harvestable timber on federal land in the Northwest will soon be liquidated, perhaps by century's end.

The only impediment to the destruction of remaining old-growth forests on public lands in the region (there is very little left in private hands) is the spotted owl. It is a rare, reclusive predator that inhabits old-growth forests. The Forest Service's sale of Northwest timber has threatened the owl's survival.

In April, after environmentalists sued the government, forcing a re-evaluation of timber-cutting plans in the region, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the owl as a threatened species. Because the Forest Service cannot legally undermine a threatened species' prospects for survival, and because a pair of owls needs at least 2,700 acres of contiguous old-growth forest to survive, the service could be legally prevented from cutting about half of the remaining old-growth on public land. Although logging has been slowed, and in some places halted, the industry has pressed Congress and the courts to re-open spotted owl refuges to cutting. A popular bumper sticker reads: “Save a Logger, Kill an Owl.”

While these longstanding Forest Service sales and subsidy policies contribute to the destruction of the Northwest woods, they alone have not precipitated the current crisis. In the mid-'80s, a new U.S. monetary policy emerged that cut the price of U.S. timber supplies to foreign buyers. Old and new policies combined in a powerful one-two punch that has knocked trees and jobs flat.

**A two-for-one sale:** In September 1985 the U.S. Treasury Department arranged a meeting of finance ministers from Japan, West Germany, the United Kingdom and France at the Plaza Hotel in New York City to set a common monetary policy. Treasury officials called the “Group of Five” together out of concern for the ballooning U.S. trade deficit. To shrink the deficit, officials proposed lowering the value of the dollar and increasing the value of other currencies to make U.S. goods more attractive to foreign buyers and to make foreign goods more expensive, and therefore less attractive, to U.S. consumers.

After some serious haggling, the Group of Five agreed, primarily because Japan and European countries wanted to pre-empt more drastic protectionist measures by the U.S.

Since then the value of the dollar has been halved and the value of other Group of Five currencies roughly doubled. This has stimulated the sale of U.S. manufactures and slowed the flow of goods into the U.S.

But while this policy has helped domestic manufacturers, it has hurt many domestic raw-material producers. The rising value of the yen has effectively halved the price of trees for Japanese buyers. The result has been a gigantic two-for-one sale of Northwest timber as the Japanese have responded to lower prices by buying timber in record amounts. Because consumers in Japan are willing to pay as much as \$150 for a single board foot of high-quality milled lumber—or 1,000 times what Japanese mills pay for standing timber in the Northwest—U.S. logs are a steal.

The sale of logs to Japan is not completely unrestricted. A 20-year-old law prevents the Forest Service from selling public logs directly to foreign buyers, though the Reagan and Bush administrations have fought even this restriction. But while it cannot sell logs directly to foreign buyers, the service permits companies that export logs from private lands to buy public timber to use in their mills as a substitute. For the forest, the result of this swap is the same: Japanese demand encourages the cutting of public and private woods alike.

## Vast Pacific woodlands are being clear cut, and no one can see the forest for the fees.

As the Forest Service's Leonard remarked, “If we want to buy Sonys and Toyotas, we've got to sell [the Japanese] something they want.” And what they want is cheap raw materials that they can process themselves, not finished lumber.

Of course, U.S. firms would prefer to sell milled lumber rather than raw logs to the Japanese. But the Japanese impose myriad trade restrictions and substantial tariffs on finished lumber products while permitting raw logs to be imported virtually without restriction. As a result of these restrictions and of consumer preferences—the Japanese use the metric system and cut their wood to different specifications—U.S. producers are effectively prevented from selling two-by-fours to Japan. The Japanese, meanwhile, reap enormous profits turning raw U.S. logs into finished lumber.

The Japanese spending spree has pushed U.S. prices up, from \$300 to \$500 per thousand board feet. But the Japanese can afford to pay higher prices because they are still paying less than they did before the dollar was devalued. In effect, the dollar devaluation enabled the Japanese to pocket U.S. government subsidies and capture U.S. jobs. Some economists estimate that between three and seven jobs at U.S. mills are lost for every million board feet of logs that are exported. Since the U.S. has exported the equivalent of a 600,000-acre forest in the last 10 years, it is easy to see how U.S. subsidy and monetary policy have contributed to employment in Japan and unemployment in the U.S.

**Cut and run:** But government policies are not entirely to blame for the destruction of the Northwest's forests. The timber industry has long practiced destructive forestry and taken advantage of federal timber subsidies. Recently it has joined the rush to cut and sell U.S. woods to Japan. Although the Japanese pay less in real terms for U.S. trees, the nominal price in dollars has gone up. As prices have climbed, U.S. producers have rushed to cash in on this seeming bonanza. Their mania for money has blinded them to wholesale cutting's long-term consequences on their workers and the woods.

In Roslyn, Wash., for instance, the Plum Creek Timber Company now plans to cut all of its 155,000-acre forest and export half of it to Japan in the next 10 years rather than continue cutting slowly, as it has done in the past. Plum Creek's owners want to take advantage of high prices even if it means they won't have any trees left to cut in the 21st century.

Plum Creek's owners are perhaps also mindful of the fate of Pacific Lumber, California's largest private owner of old-growth redwood. Pacific Lumber was purchased in a leveraged buyout by Maxxam in 1985. Maxxam borrowed \$754 million to buy the company, and in order to pay off this debt the company has abandoned its sustainable, selective-cutting practices and is now liquidating its woods with Paul Bunyan-like dispatch. The irony is that while U.S. officials propose debt-for-nature swaps in Brazil, timber companies in the U.S. trade nature for debt.

Accelerated cutting, prompted by firms chasing higher prices, will reduce timber supplies and drive prices still higher. While the Japanese can better afford to pay these prices, domestic timber producers have to compete in national and regional markets. Timber producers outside the Northwest have to pay only about \$200 per 1,000 board feet, which means they can undersell loggers in the Northwest. Mills in the Northwest have found that rising prices for logs, which are being bid up by the Japanese, are making them uncompetitive in U.S. markets. For lack of cheap logs, many U.S. companies are being forced to close their doors, in effect telling laid-off workers that they can return to their jobs when the trees grow back—say in 100 years, give or take a generation.

**The rain forest connection:** Not only have U.S. policies hurt domestic producers and Northwest woods, but also they have undercut the ecologies and economies of forests in the Third World. In the Pacific, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia have banned or restricted the export of raw logs because the sale of logs to Japan has hastened the ruin of their rain forests. Thailand, for instance, banned log exports last year after floods caused by deforestation ravaged the country.

Countries have also banned log exports to force Japan to accept wood products manufactured by indigenous firms. Since banning log exports, Indonesia has built its indigenous plywood industry into the largest in the world. Although a domestic timber industry still puts undue pressure on tropical forests, domestic producers have a greater incentive to manage their resources more wisely than foreign owners. In this instance, “backward” Third World countries have a more “advanced” policy than the U.S.

But the effectiveness of export bans, both in developing local industry and breaking down Japanese barriers to trade, depends on a collective effort. So long as the Japanese can buy raw logs from the U.S., they can continue to restrict the import of finished goods from log-banning countries and protect their own industry. By permitting the export of raw logs, the U.S. undercuts its own forests and timber industries and those of others.

Recently a diverse collection of environmentalists, small mill owners, state officials and congressional representatives have begun urging a ban on log exports, arguing that logs now shipped overseas could instead fuel mills that can no longer obtain old-growth timber from public land. While the states await congressional approval for such a ban (states cannot alone regulate international trade), Oregon voters in June approved by a nine-to-one margin a referendum banning the export of unmilled logs.

But if Congress does not permit states to impose export bans, and if the Forest Service and private industry continue to practice unsustainable forestry, the destruction of woods will proceed apace. And within a few years there might not be any timber left to sell, subsidize or export. □

**Robert Schaeffer** is senior editor of *Greenpeace* and is the author of a forthcoming book, *Warpaths: The Politics of Partition*, to be published early next year.



# EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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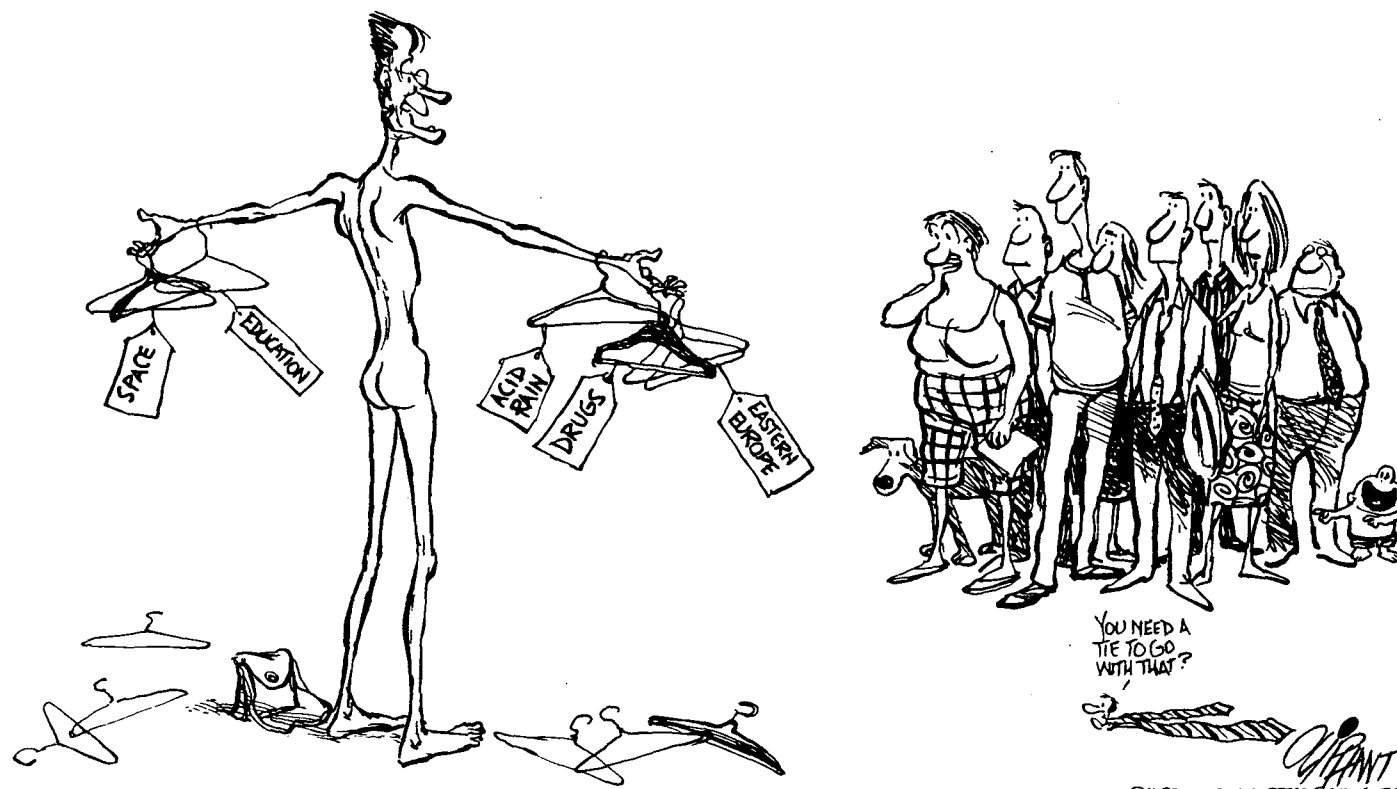
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THE EMPEROR DISPLAYS HIS NEW WARDROBE.

## Prisons, jails and prosecutors won't solve drug crisis

Showing little understanding of the nature of the drug crisis in our country and not even addressing the causes of addiction among the poor, President Bush declared yet another war on drugs. His initiative is only the latest in a line of similar campaigns dating back to the Nixon administration, and it follows a well-established pattern. Like his predecessors, Bush plans to spend 70 percent of the \$7.9 billion he wants for his new war on law enforcement efforts. As federal drug policy director William J. Bennett explains it, the administration wants "more prisons, more jails, more courts, more prosecutors." In short, he is proposing to more than double federal assistance to states and localities in order to "enlarge our criminal justice system across the board."

Despite overwhelming evidence that law enforcement has only minimal—if any—effect on drug abuse and trafficking, Bush's call has been met by leaders of the Democratic opposition with even greater bellicosity and with talk of increased taxes. Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Joseph R. Biden (D-DE) says that Bush's plan "is not tough enough." If the president wants to wage war on drugs, Biden says, what we need is "another D-Day, not another Vietnam, not a limited war, fought on the cheap and destined for another tragedy"—as if the tragedy of Vietnam was a matter of money. And House Speaker Thomas S. Foley (D-WA) also says that Bush is being cheap. "It will be difficult to assume," Foley says, that we can "meet the cost of the drug war without additional revenue coming into the government."

**High on demagoguery:** In other words, these Democratic leaders accept all of Bush's assumptions, but—with an eye on the polls that say Americans believe drugs are the most important problem facing the nation—are trying to prove their greater manhood. Even Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA), who suggested that the way to pay for this

new war was to scrap some B-2 bombers or take money out of the Star Wars budget, did not object to the basic approach of Bush's plan.

By mindlessly playing to the feelings expressed in the polls, Republican and Democratic leaders alike have chosen demagoguery over responsible leadership. They have ignored the underlying realities—and the complexity—of the drug crisis, for which they are largely responsible. Instead they are blindly accelerating the programs that have made things as bad as they are. As Mark A. R. Kleiman of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government points out in *Marijuana: Costs of Abuse, Costs of Control*, the Reagan policy of interdicting marijuana imports simply had the effect of increasing domestic production and street prices. In turn, as Daniel Lazare pointed out in these pages last week, higher marijuana prices and the greater ease of importing cocaine stimulated its production, leading to lower cocaine prices and greater street use of the more potent drug.

**Cracking down:** Mathea Falco, an assistant secretary of state for narcotics matters in the Carter administration, also has pointed out the fatal flaws in the Bush plan. One problem, she argues, is that even if coca cultivation and cocaine refining is cut in half, street prices would increase by less than 5 percent. She also points out that since 1985, illicit drug use has declined by about 12 percent a year, while the Bush plan sets as a goal only a 5 percent annual reduction. The most pressing problem, in other words, is not overall drug use, but the crack crisis. And this problem must be addressed specifically if it is to be solved.

There are two dimensions here, the supply side and the demand side. On the supply side, it seems clear that legalization and regulation of marijuana would greatly reduce—if not eliminate—the profitability of the cocaine trade, and, therefore, the incentive of the pushers. On the demand side, the problem is social. It is jobs, decent housing, schooling that can lead to productive lives. In short, federal programs aimed at eliminating poverty and the terrible hopelessness and aimlessness that accompanies it.

We, of course, have said all of this before. The logic of it seems unassailable, just as the politics seems almost hopeless. But as politicians and the media take the easy route, every year the problem gets worse. The current war on drugs, like its predecessors, will only continue to make things worse.



# LETTERS

## Lousy articles

HERE IS MY THEORY OF WHY, WITH ALL THE talk, crime and drugs get worse and worse: petty crime, drugs and violence are allowed to increase in direct ratio to the increase in big crime—involving hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars—pulled off by very rich, “respectable” people.

Petty crime is a diversion to distract our interest from the big crimes. The big crimes: refusal to pay taxes, a ripoff of more than \$100 billion a year; the savings and loan ripoff of perhaps \$500 billion (who got all that money?); the increase in interest from around 5 percent to around 10 percent, transferring billions and billions of dollars from the workers and small business to the rich.

From 1960 to 1987, our economy increased by around nine times. Dividends went up from \$13 billion to \$95 billion, around seven times. But interest income went up from \$11 billion to \$353 billion, an astounding increase of 32 times! Wages went up five times.

The original capitalists got rich from producing useful items. Today the rich have become a gang of loan sharks—parasites—just taking in money and giving nothing in return.

And that is the reason there is no money in our treasury for education, drug or crime control, housing, day-care centers, etc.

Once we had productive people like Edison, Ford, Westinghouse. Now we have Malcolm Forbes, who never produced a useful article.

S. Jerie  
New York

## Double standard

IN 1986 THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SYSTEM WAS surely incorrect to claim that the network would have to broadcast a response if *Dark Circle* were telecast (*ITT*, July 19). The fairness doctrine applies to stations licensed by the FCC, not to networks. Moreover, the fairness doctrine does not require an equal-time response; “equal time” applies only to candidates for elective office.

Some years ago when PBS transmitted a John Kenneth Galbraith series on economics, PBS chose to allow his right-wing critics a one- or two-minute commentary at the end of each hour. Airing a response is no big deal. The question is why the fairness doctrine is applied so selectively. Programming that promotes policies of the political and economic establishment never carries rebuttals from left critics, but those on the left must yield part of their broadcast time for rebuttals by forces that already have a near-monopoly on access to the public.

Richard L. Miller  
Kansas City, Mo.

## No comparison

I TAKE STRONG EXCEPTION TO NAN ELSASSER AND Nelson Valdes' comparison of Cuban Gen. Ochoa and Oliver North (*ITT*, Aug. 2). Ochoa admitted to betraying the Cuban revolution, and no one outside the pathological right maintained that his smuggling activities had the approval of Fidel Castro and the top leadership of the Cuban government. North, by contrast, maintained all

along that he had the approval of his superior officers and adduced a hefty sampling of unshredded documentary evidence to support his contention.

To speculate that Castro may have “wittingly provided Ochoa with the cover he needed,” without offering any evidence at all, is a vicious smear of the sort normally at home in such publications as *Human Events* and *The New Republic*.

The article also implies that Cuba's role in Angola, where volunteers came by invitation to defend the sovereignty of that country from the forces of fascist apartheid, is roughly morally equivalent to Reagan's dispatching terrorists to torture Nicaraguan schoolteachers, bomb civilians in Tripoli and strafe the mental hospital in Grenada. According to Elsasser and Valdes, “both [North and Ochoa] mucked around in increasingly tainted waters.”

Further along we are told that “Reagan's see-no-evil attitude allowed North and his pals to sell arms to an avowed enemy of the U.S.” This is exactly what the Tower report and the congressional inquiry concluded; no one except Reagan's most die-hard believers swallows it for a minute. In *These Times* in particular did an outstanding job of exposing the lie for what it was, publishing regular updates not only on the Iran-contra scandal but, more importantly, on the genesis of the conspiracy in the machinations of the October Surprise.

Elsasser and Valdes also apparently believe that the contras were a legitimate army using “ammunition to shoot at Nicaraguan troops advised by Ochoa.” Every reputable human rights group has confirmed, on the contrary, that the contras avoid combat with the Sandinista army, deliberately choosing to shell cooperatives, blow up hospitals and terrorize peasant farmers instead.

The major difference overlooked by the two in their eagerness to slander the Cuban revolution is that the Cuban foreign policy of internationalist aid to developing countries enjoys the support, by most reports, of the vast majority of the population, however reluctant they may be as individuals to “volunteer.” In the U.S., by contrast, a consistent two-to-one majority has opposed the “bipartisan” policy of the Reagan-aunts, even without knowledge of the bloody and criminal details. As Noam Chomsky has persistently argued, this is precisely why the administration was forced to turn to covert intervention, “low-intensity conflict,” alliances with international dope pushers and neo-Nazis, and Big Lie propaganda techniques directed against the “enemy” population at home.

Ronald P. Reed  
Juneau, Alaska

## Humorloss

YOUR READERS' DEADLY SERIOUS RESPONSE TO Larry Doyle's tongue-in-cheek article (*Letters*, Aug. 30) confirms what I've noticed ever since moving from the Midwest to New England many years ago: an awful lot of people are totally lacking in a sense of humor. You know right away when they ask, wide-eyed, “Do you really mean that?” (Of course not, you twerps!)

Only now I know the inability to read the punch line isn't limited to New England. It seems to have seeped across the country to places like Indiana, Kansas, California and Utah.

Good grief!

Dorothy Ferrier  
Warren, Conn.

## Rebel arms

REFERRING TO CHRIS NORTON, I AM GLAD THAT someone is finally taking on the issue of “Nicaraguan aid” to the Salvador rebels (*ITT*, July 19), a propaganda ploy that has so far been swallowed whole by the *New York Times* and others.

One option Norton fails to entertain is the possibility that some of the weapons were planted by the CIA, which has a long history of planting “Soviet-traceable” or “Cuban-traceable” armaments when it suits their purpose.

The rebels have in the past used such openly available Soviet bloc weapons as RPG grenade launchers, but their main source of supply will continue to be the Salvadoran army, and they will continue to prefer weapons compatible with U.S. and NATO ammunition.

Jon Arnold  
Chicago

## Internationalist alternative

JOHN JUDIS IS A RELIABLE GUIDE TO MAINSTREAM political developments, but he hasn't the foggiest understanding of left alternatives. Readers of his article surveying the politics of global economic issues (*ITT*, July 5) should recognize that, contrary to Judis' assertions, there is an alternative to the sterile debate between the protectionist and “competitiveness” camps. The best traditions of the left have always approached these questions from the perspective of internationalism, and they continue to do so today. In broad terms, the solution to the competitive squeeze being placed on U.S. workers is not to put up bar-

riers against goods produced abroad or give in to a corporate agenda in the name of competitiveness, but to make common cause with workers elsewhere who are also being squeezed. Concretely, this means:

- Greater cooperation between workers in different countries who are employed in the same global industry or even by the same multinational firms. This is beginning to happen, although the weakness of the labor movement within the U.S. sets limits to this strategy.

- Concerted action to extend the rights of organization and collective action to workers in all countries. Significant steps have already been taken to incorporate labor rights standards in U.S. trade law; the struggle now is to see that these measures are properly enforced, while extending them as principles of foreign and economic policy generally.

- Coordination between the labor and social movements of the participating countries to set the terms for the global marketplace: economic regulation on an international level. A precedent is now being set by the “social dialogue” taking place in Europe in preparation for economic integration in 1992; in all likelihood, the advances made by the Greens in the recent elections of the European Parliament will guarantee that environmental as well as labor issues will be addressed. Internationally oriented U.S. movements can try to extend this dialogue to the U.S. and other countries via the United Nations conferences and other forums.

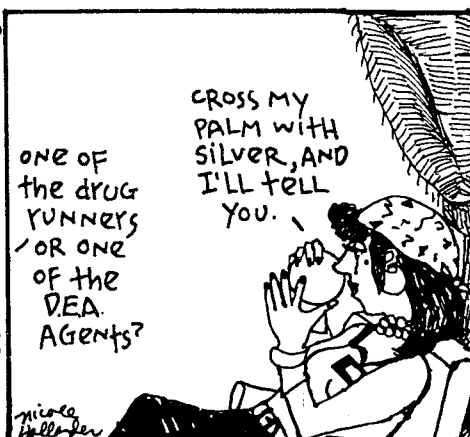
- A global strategy to restore incomes to workers and their communities in the Third World. The components of this strategy include massive debt relief (without ideologically inspired “free market” strings), the use of international credit institutions to promote progressive redistribution rather than austerity on borrowers (“reverse conditionality”) and support for the extension of democratic rights to countries ruled by oligarchy and repression. The purpose is both humanitarian and self-interested, since greater incomes will permit more purchases of U.S.-made goods.

- International pressure for arms reduction. Lifting the burden of the arms race would improve the economic prospects of people everywhere, even if no other measures were taken.

Together, these proposals constitute an internationalist alternative to national economic decline. Many individuals are now working to implement them and, despite Judis' claims, they are not irrelevant to the emerging politics of the '90s.

Peter Dorman  
Dept. of Economics  
Smith College

## SYLVIA



## by Nicole Hollander





By Paul Selvin

**I**N THE NOVEL *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF Solitude*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez tells the story of a U.S. banana company operating in Latin America. To avoid giving rights to its workers, the company claims that workers don't exist. Company lawyers prove that "the banana company did not have, never had had, and never would have any workers in its service because they were all hired on a temporary and occasional basis.... And by a decision of the court it was established and set down in solemn decrees that the workers did not exist." These "non-workers," naturally, were not legally entitled to unionize or sue for compensation after becoming sick from handling toxic chemicals.

Unfortunately, such scenarios are not just the stuff of fiction. Indeed, on the Berkeley campus of the University of California (UC), and in many institutions of higher learning across the country, such nonsense, slightly modified, is purveyed. Graduate student employees—teaching assistants (TAs) and research assistants (RAs)—are not employees, according to the university administration, because they are temporary, "unnecessary" and primarily students, a claim recently supported by a California labor board and, ironically, based on a 1979 law intended to extend labor rights to university workers. Consequently, TAs and RAs are not allowed to unionize, nor, apparently, are they entitled to health care.

The student employees at Berkeley, not surprisingly, aren't interested in this logic.

## Campus serfs fight for recognition as workers



At the end of last semester, graduate students walked out on their university jobs in a two-day show of strength. Organized by the campus union, the Association of Graduate Student Employees (AGSE), the walkout shut down the university. The first day two-thirds of classes were canceled; the second day more than three-fourths were canceled. Even in the law school, where almost all the courses are taught by professors, more than three-fourths were canceled. "I regard teaching assistants more like serfs," commented Professor Michael

Burawoy, who joined the picket line. "Basically, the students are just asking to be hauled out of the Dark Ages." As in any labor movement, the initial struggle is for union recognition, the right to collective bargaining. Bread-and-butter issues such as wages, health care and working conditions (such as the size of classes taught by TAs) are items to be brought to the table once the UC administration is forced to sit at it.

Behind these day-to-day concerns lie larger issues. "You shouldn't learn from your work. That's what the latest PERB [Public Employees Relation Board] ruling means," says Colette Patt, a graduate student in education and an AGSE executive board member. Six years ago, when the university first refused to bargain with the union, AGSE sued UC before the state labor board, charging unfair labor practices. The case was the longest in PERB history, with more than 1,409 witnesses and 5,000 pages of testimony. Just a few days before the strike, the PERB majority ruled that teaching assistants are not employees, in part, because the educational value of teaching outweighs its economic value to graduate students. The ruling was based on a bizarre clause forced into law by the powerful UC lobby. The clause states that if graduate students learn too much from their jobs then they're not employees. "It's disturbing to hear a state agency talk that way," says Patt. AGSE's position is if you perform a service, you should get paid; if you learn from it, all the better.

The PERB majority, appointed by the conservative Gov. George Deukmejian, stated further that TAs are not employees because they're "unnecessary": by replacing them with non-student instructors, the university could still operate its undergraduate program. "Cannery workers are replaceable," retorts Patt. "Does that make them not workers?" In fact, as the strike was intended to show, it is dubious that the university could handle its teaching load without TAs, who teach 58 percent of the lower division classes (or its research load without RAs, who were also found to be non-employees).

**Beyond legalisms:** What is AGSE's conclusion about the courts after six years of litigation? "The courts don't mean a thing," says Robby Cohen, one of the founders of AGSE. "Political power is what counts. The university isn't going to bargain in good faith even if the courts order the university

to recognize us. Only a living, vibrant union on campus will do that."

Union organizing on campuses may also change the nature of student activity. "I don't mean to denigrate student movements, which are important," says strike organizer and United Auto Workers (UAW) representative Mary Ann Massenburg, "but they tend to be symbolic and ebb and flow with semesters. This is a labor movement. We have an ongoing commitment that doesn't come and go with the flow of students." AGSE affiliated with the UAW/District 65 three years ago to help finance organizing and legal expenses. Already the international union has spent more than a quarter of a million dollars and has committed its strike fund—worth \$800 million—to support an indefinite walkout, estimated to cost between \$500,000 to \$600,000 a week. "The union is an institution itself, for better or for worse, that provides stability," Massenburg said. "The UAW is as big as UC itself."

The UAW's motivation is simple: white-collar workers are its fastest-growing component, and attracting students, both graduates and undergraduates, ensures future growth. Overcoming the distrust of unions, widely held by graduate students in particular and professionals in general, is a major strike goal of the UAW. "This may be Berkeley," Massenburg said, "but a lot of students here have never seen collective action in the workplace. We want the strike to be a positive union experience for them." As just one sign of the changing times, some UAW flyers are stamped "Union of All Workers."

**Partial victory:** At Berkeley, it now appears that collective action has paid off. Just a few days before the start of the new semester, fearing another strike, the university agreed to negotiate with the graduate student union over terms of employment. The university still claims that graduate student workers are not employees and vows to continue the legal battle, which is entering the California Court of Appeals. But until the case is settled—probably many years from now—collective bargaining will be a reality on the Berkeley campus. "It's a victory," says Massenburg. "We've convinced the university to take graduate student workers seriously." It's also a message to graduate students throughout the country. "Once you have majority strength and are willing to show that strength, you don't need to wait for the law," says Massenburg. "Collective action works."

That message has reached a new sense of urgency. Other University of California campuses, including Davis, Santa Cruz, Irvine and San Francisco, have recently formed or reinvigorated TA RA unions. In the Midwest, the oldest graduate student union in the country is currently fighting for survival: the University of Wisconsin administration broke its union contract after 14 years, a move recently supported in the state courts. Further east, at other public schools like the University of Massachusetts, and even at some private schools like Princeton University, graduate students are trying to organize unions. They all hope to emulate the graduate students at state universities in Michigan, Florida, Oregon, New Jersey—and now Berkeley—who have already won collective bargaining rights.

**Paul Selvin** is a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley.

# 13

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## Oh, What a Lovely War!

LONDON—Rupert Murdoch captured British headlines here last week by giving a lecture at the Edinburgh Festival in which he launched a savage attack on British television. Murdoch is the most conspicuous of the transnational press moguls, powerful in the U.S., Britain and Australia. As one might expect, he had specific reasons for his attack. He is trying to break into British TV, via material dropped on British heads and into British satellite dishes from his transponders, and finds himself hampered by British state regulations curbing his efforts.

To my surprise, I found myself agreeing with a good half of what Murdoch had to say. British culture as distilled by British television is, said Murdoch, nostalgic, class-obsessed and utterly unrepresentative of what modern Britain is really about. Year after year the BBC has served up and sold profitably to the United States various versions of *Upstairs Downstairs*, content in the knowledge that Americans—PBS, that is—will always be delighted to have yet another tour around the creaking museums of an England suspended in a time warp melding Avon and Edwardian England into one binding curve of doublet, pinafore and stuffed shirt.

Meanwhile, Murdoch went on, British television executives have sneered at the offerings of American television, without acknowledging that in many ways it is far superior to what they serve up to the British public. Here again Murdoch had a point. A lot of British television is either awful home-grown product or American import. The American imports are often better. Of course Murdoch, who owns Twentieth Century Fox, is not prepared to admit that these comparisons are relative, and that almost everything shown on either side of the Atlantic is junk by any rational measurement.

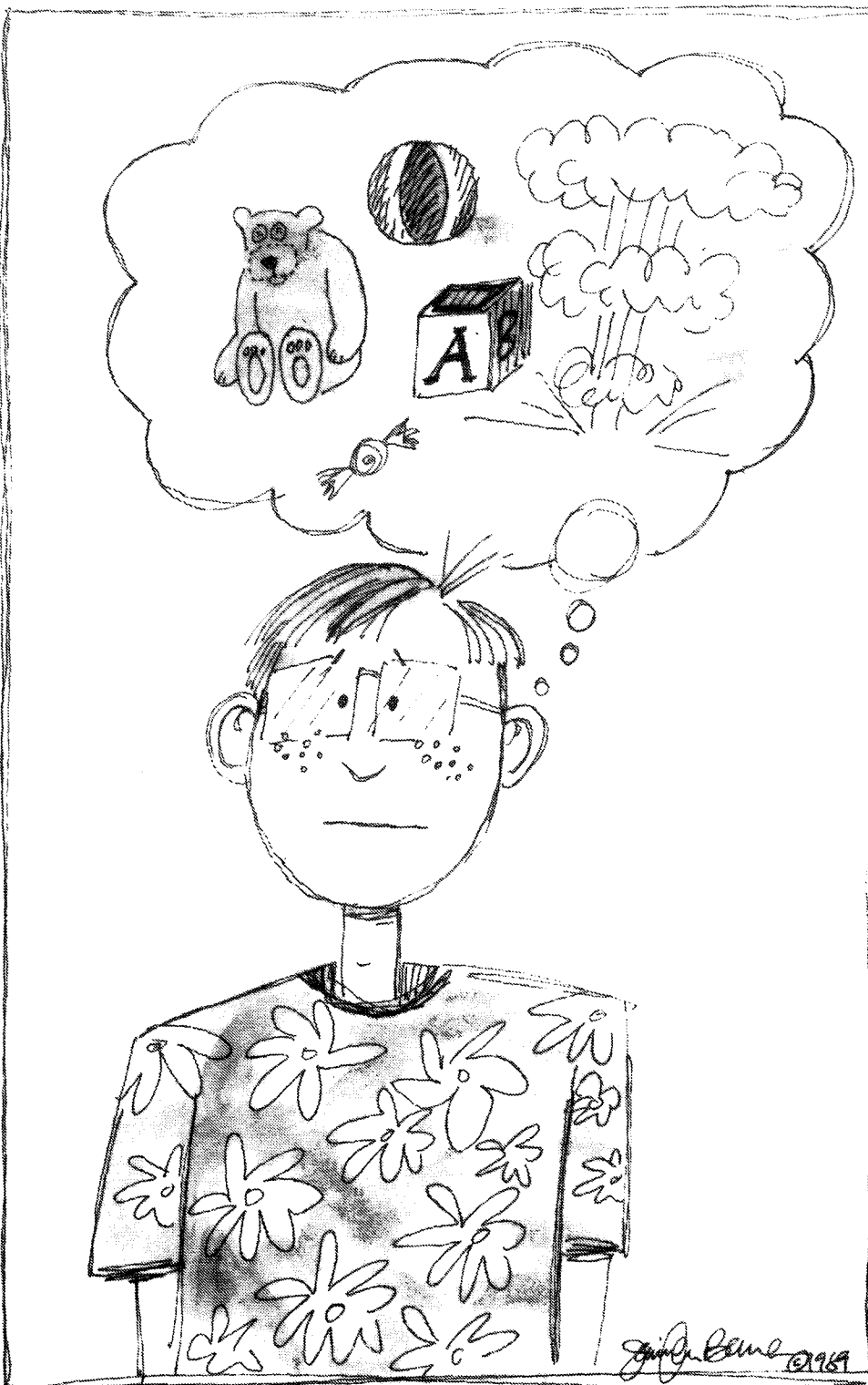
**Putdown under:** As an Australian who has been at the receiving end of a lot of British snobbery, Murdoch would inevitably be sensitive to the elitist aspects of British state culture. There was a real energy to the passages of his lecture in which he lashed out at the British ruling class, by which he meant the cluster of controlling elites that used to be described in Britain as "The Establishment." Murdoch contrasted this fossilized ruling group with what he hailed as the true "new" Britain, and here is where one would part company with him, since he then delivered himself of rapturous odes to the spirit of Thatcherism, where the magic of the marketplace liberated man from the shackles of the past and made the cash nexus the central creative, fructifying relationship of the modern world.

Murdoch's attacks on British nostalgia came just as the country was readying itself for the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II on Sept. 3, 1939. This is now the defining event of British historical memory, just as World War I, the General Strike and the Hunger Marches of the '30s were the defining moments in the imaginations of those who had passed age 30 by the time World War II began.

I suppose I am the youngest cohort to have any direct memory of the war, being born when it had been going on for two years. In my first three years I spent a fair amount of time in St. Johns Wood subway station—one of the deepest in London and just across the road from our apartment

## ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn



block—where my parents used to go when the bombing was particularly bad. The Germans were trying to hit central London but often overshot and hit St. Johns Wood.

For some months I was evacuated like hundreds of thousands of other young Londoners, and in my case dispatched to a horrible institution in Basingstoke that still figures in my nightmares. As the war ended, rationing remained in force—the British have never eaten more sensibly—and my mother used to supplement our sparse weekly meat ration by preparing crow, slain by some enterprising neighbor. The other common form of flesh available was whale. Crow tastes better than whale and is not so distressing from the ecological point of view.

For the next 20 years, the war dominated everything. First of all, it changed the political culture, as war always does. Observing the shattering incompetence of the ruling class and refreshed by the solvent of war that exposed class relations in a harshly unflattering light, the British voting masses turned Churchill and the Conservatives out. The conservative counterattack began soon thereafter and has been going on with increasing success ever since.

By the early '50s war memoirs were in full spate, as generals and politicians fought

all the battles again, seeking to secure their own place in history. My childhood reading was either Victorian fiction about the Indian mutiny and the skirmishes of the Empire, or about escapes by British POWs from German prison camps. The main literary war was, it turned out, really being fought against the Americans, trying to demonstrate that only British cunning, bravery and strategic wisdom had saved Eisenhower, Patton and the others from a debacle. In the immediate postwar years the Russians were highly regarded as the heroes of Stalingrad. Going to school on the bus in 1945 and 1946 I used to wear a little astrakhan hat and kindly Londoners would pat me on the head and say, "Hello, little Stalin," with avuncular geniality. (Yes, I suppose that's when it all started.)

The next big event in the formation of the postwar national memory was Suez and the humiliation of Eisenhower's order to the British, French and Israelis that they desist from their attack on Egypt. It's the only time I've ever thought I was going to be lynched. The British attack on Suez came in 1956, when I was at school in Scotland. The news came over the BBC in the plummy tones of British newscasters of the time that "British planes have bombed Ismailia." The boys in my house common room jumped

on the tables, cheering. Many of them had fathers who were in the armed forces. My family was then living in Ireland, and I was Anglo-Irish by class and cultural background anyway. I remained seated and declined repeated invitations to rise and cheer. I cannot recall another moment of equivalent ugliness.

A couple of years later I and tens of thousands of others were on the road from Aldermaston in what was the formative political experience of my generation, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In a recent essay the British historian Raphael Samuel, whom I first met on a CND march in 1958, wrote about the complexities of historical memory:

*A particularly potent analogy was that between the military establishments of the day—preparing, we believed, a nuclear holocaust—and those who had been responsible in 1916 for the first day on the Somme—the battle in which 250,000 British soldiers had been sent to their deaths. Playing First World War analogies against those of the World War II, which the Conservatives—attacking detente of any kind as "appeasement"—were rather successfully, if bizarrely, appropriating to themselves, was a normal feature of the CND argument, illustrating the perils of the arms race and the fatality of a Europe divided into two hostile camps. For those who had been brought up on the war poets—anyone, that is, who had taken sixth-form English at school—the analogy was a fearful one, and it was powerfully revived in the 1950s by a literature of historic exposure: by the American anti-war film *Paths of Glory*; and most influentially in Joan Littlewood's *Oh, What a Lovely War*—a brilliant theatrical transposition of the message of CND. For some of us at least, marching to Aldermaston, sitting down in front of the War Office or being arrested in Trafalgar Square was a long-delayed settling of accounts for Passchendaele.*

**Sublimated slaughter:** Samuel is on the mark here. Behind all the memories of World War II lurked the memory of Somme, Passchendaele, the Marne. I knew about it because my father, who was born in 1904, used to tell me how he and Graham Greene, who were in the same class at their "public" school at Berkhamsted, used to figure that if the war continued they would be dead within a couple of years. Sixth-formers of 18 used to leave school and go to the front shortly thereafter, where the life expectancy of a junior officer was about two weeks. No one can understand British political culture of the first half of this century without understanding the consequences of having British generals like Haig order charges that saw a quarter of a million men machine-gunned in a single day.

But it would be wrong to say that the 50th anniversary of the start of the World War II has provoked any particularly strong wave of nostalgia. In a way, the British seem to have gotten over it. Perhaps the victory over the Argentinians in the Malvinas Falklands war—the first British victory achieved without help from the Americans in about a century—somehow purged forever the need to relive Dunkirk and D-Day. The theater of memory awaits a new play. The play Murdoch wants to see mounted is the saga of Thatcherism and the New Market Man. But there are signs that the politico-cultural wave of Thatcherism has crested and is now starting to recede. The political culture is ready for renewal as memories of war finally fade.



**Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877**  
By Eric Foner  
Harper and Row, 736 pp., \$14.95

By Steven Hahn

**A**T A TIME WHEN HISTORIANS AND the general public have come to question the significance and achievements of revolutionary change (and to lament what they deem as the excesses), Eric Foner's long-awaited volume on Reconstruction seems oddly out of place. For in a manner that parts company with much of the previous scholarship (and with much of the current fashion) Foner writes powerfully and sympathetically about what he argues was America's most far-reaching—and its most violent—revolutionary experience.

Eschewing methodological trendiness and political apologetics, he combines a sophisticated class analysis with an engrossing narrative. The result is not only the first full-scale reassessment of the period in a generation, but also the most compelling work of synthesis that a left historian has recently produced. The appearance of *Reconstruction* is a welcome and impressive event.

**Thickets of controversy:** Foner's task is daunting—all the more so because he has insisted upon a national, rather than a sectional, perspective. The subject matter, therefore, ranges widely both topically and geographically. The scholarly literature he traverses is enormous and presents a thicket of controversies as difficult and perilous to negotiate as was the wilderness for the armies of Grant and Lee.

The theaters of action include military outposts, plantations and farms, industrializing cities, the Western territories and the halls of state legislatures, along with the nation's capital. And, amidst a rapidly elaborated bureaucracy, the available documentation simply staggers the imagination. What brings coherence to Foner's study are remarkably well-developed and integrated themes: the struggle over the meaning of freedom and free labor, the advance of capitalist political economy and culture and the emergence of a modern nation-state.

*Reconstruction* begins, not with the end of the Civil War, but, appropriately, with the Emancipation Proclamation, which turned the war into a social revolution. In the pages that follow we find the characters, episodes and settings familiar to the Reconstruction story, though they are always presented in a light that mixes the latest scholarly judgments with Foner's own interesting insights: Lincoln and Johnson, Radical and Moderate Republicans, New Departure and White-Line Democrats, planters and yeomen, federal officials and the Ku Klux Klan, Grant

## Revolution: lost and found



and the Liberal Republicans, and the presidential election crisis of 1876-1877.

We also find less-familiar characters that reflect Foner's special view of Reconstruction: the border states, Northern workers and labor leaders, women reformers and suffrage activists, native Americans and the trans-Mississippi West. But at the heart of the drama—and a great drama it is—are black Americans, free and freed, from the North and the South.

**Black impetus:** Customarily portrayed as pawns, victims or beneficiaries of white political machinations, African-Americans here become the inspiration and agents of what Foner calls "a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent in the history of this or any other country that abolished slavery in the 19th century."

Building upon institutions and sensibilities forged chiefly under the slave regime, African-Americans helped topple slavery, defeat the master class on the battlefield and set an agenda for reconstructing the South and the nation. Theirs was an expansive vision that linked economic independence, social justice and universal manhood suffrage with the initiatives and guardianship of an activist state. Although ultimately defeated, the struggle to realize that vision left an indelible imprint and legacy.

It has been common for liberal and left historians to focus upon the ultimate defeat, upon what did not happen during Reconstruction. Foner is certainly mindful of this (his

### HISTORY

subtitle is, after all, *America's Unfinished Revolution*). Yet it is attentiveness to the dynamics of struggle that gives Foner's work its energy and rhythm, and it reminds us that the likely alternative outcomes were rather more conservative and repressive than radical and progressive.

The wheels of change encountered a great many obstacles and could easily have ground to a halt well before the advent of military Reconstruction. Andrew Johnson's policies, for example, which pardoned most Southern whites and demanded little more from them than the acceptance of emancipation and the repudiation of secession, initially enjoyed considerable support in Republican circles. That the wheels continued to turn owed in part to

**Reconstruction pulsates with the process of black politicization.**

the high-minded efforts of Radical Republicans as well as to the political opportunism of those who feared that the party's national power might be undermined. But it owed most to the agitation of an emerging black community.

*Reconstruction* pulsates with the process of black politicization and mobilization: from free blacks in New Orleans and freed black soldiers during the war, to freedmen's conventions in Southern cities in 1865-66, to local Union Leagues and black churches in the rural districts in 1867-68. For just as the reform impulse lost its thrust in Congress, it gained a new lease in the South as Republican regimes assumed power in the ex-Confederate states and ex-slaves assumed power in many of the dominions of the once-haughty planters.

**Pushing the boundaries:** The agitation over the nature of the body politic and the meaning of freedom was by no means confined to the South. As Foner shows, the Civil War and Reconstruction at once hastened the capitalist transformation of the North and breathed renewed life into popular movements that had waned during the 1850s. Battles over women's political rights and the eight-hour day came to stir national politics and push at the boundaries of the free-labor ideology that had rallied thousands of Northerners to the banner of anti-slavery.

The defeat of these battles helped define the limits and establish the character of the revolution that the Civil War unleashed, North and South. For if the free-labor ideology embraced the goal of economic independence and state-promoted commercial development, few policy-makers were prepared to upset further the sanctity of private property, the inviolability of contract, the gender hierarchies of the household and the traditions of federalism upon which that ideology also rested.

Reconstruction created a national citizenship and consecrated the sovereignty of the federal government and equality before the law. But few Republicans looked to push "beyond equality to consider the realities of economic power and widespread economic dependence and the state's responsibility for combating them." So free-labor ideology, like much of the antebellum world, fell casualty to the very war it inspired.

Nowhere, as Foner demonstrates with great skill, were the consequences more apparent, or tragic, than in the South. Even as the advent of Radical Reconstruction shifted the balance of power away from the old elite, black efforts to enlarge their spheres of freedom were hedged by the Republican Party's reluctance to support land reform and its desire to attract Whiggish Southern whites.

Receiving little direct assistance from their Northern counterparts, Southern Republicans were soon rent by deep divisions of class, race and policy. And although state governments succeeded in rebuilding much of the region's economic infrastructure and in greatly expanding social services, they generally failed either to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of most Southern whites (higher taxes alienated small and large proprietors alike) or to protect their ranks against an increasingly violent counterattack.

**Slavery to freedom to slavery:** Free-labor ideology did encourage sympathetic federal officials to help undermine the most coercive controls associated with slavery, but it was similarly ill-equipped to address the enormous disparities of wealth and power that freedpeople had to confront in the countryside. Once what could be regarded as the principle of contract was implemented, blacks were left to fend for themselves. Most ended up as impoverished tenants and croppers.

Largely dependent on the support and intervention of a federal government in steady retreat from Reconstruction, Republican regimes in states without black majorities fell relatively quickly. The panic of 1873 and the ensuing great depression of the 19th century then supplied the crowning blows throughout the nation: weakening the position of labor and small producers, strengthening the hand and promoting the class



consciousness of big capital, and speeding the transition from "ideological" to "organizational" politics.

With the Supreme Court commencing an attack upon the breadth of the postwar constitutional amendments and related federal legislation and with scandals rocking the Grant administration, the road to "redemption" was nearly complete. Federal troops stationed in the South would soon be sent against Indians and striking railroad workers. The era of Reconstruction had ended; the age of capital had

already begun.

**Slippery revolutions:** Foner concludes by invoking the compelling words of W.E.B. DuBois, whose influence is evident throughout: "The slave went free, stood a brief moment in the sun, then moved back toward slavery." The subsequent black experience of poverty and oppression, of segregation and disfranchisement has indeed led many historians not only to judge Reconstruction a "failure," but also to question whether anything fundamental really had changed.

Yet Foner is careful to suggest that

revolutions can, and usually do, slide backward without ceasing to be revolutions. Alluding to the designs of Southerners in 1865 and to the travails of most other post-emancipation societies, he asks us to consider what the South and the nation might have been like had a different, and more limited, Reconstruction taken place: had slavery not been abolished in a sweeping fashion without compensation to the former owners; had the Southern elite not been driven from national power; had the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments not been enacted or Radical

Reconstruction not unfolded; had significant room not been opened for the further development of black community life. If the failure of Reconstruction bolstered racism and conservatism throughout America, the achievements left social institutions, legal precedents and a political heritage that would shape future struggles.

Foner thereby commands us to look ahead and, in new ways, to contemplate the legacy of Reconstruction. But at the same time, he impels us to look back and reconsider the sources of black political conscious-

ness and collective behavior and the trajectory of America's revolutionary process of emancipation, unification and capitalist transformation. Foner leaves us, that is, with a large and significant agenda as well as with a large and significant book. Which is why *Reconstruction* will find a secure place among the truly distinguished examples of American historical writing.

Steven Hahn teaches history at the University of California at San Diego. He is at work on a book on the black political experience in the rural South, 1860-1900.

### The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism

By Cornel West  
University of Wisconsin  
279 pp., \$18.25

By William E. Cain

## Tuning in truth amid pragmatic static

The pragmatist is moral, progressive, hopeful (if guarded) about the prospects for change and is dedicated to "critical intelligence" as the intellectual's chief resource and tool.

While West greatly values American pragmatism and the stimulating

### PHILOSOPHY

example set by its foremost figures, he judges that pragmatism has failed to treat politics explicitly and in adequate detail, and is generally weak on race, gender and class. West urges that we learn from the pragmatists but go beyond them, translating their open, experimental, dynamic "philosophical outlook" into radical "social motion." He recognizes that this will not be easy, in part because pragmatism by its nature spurns comprehensive political programs and movements that violate its skeptical spirit and tactical sense. Pragmatism prompts its advocates to address specific evils in the society and to take part in alliances and coalitions only so long as these prove useful.

For West, pragmatism also must be wedded to prophecy, to the social criticism of the Bible and to the message of love and compassion that Christian belief dramatizes. In this book, as in his previous books, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (1982) and *Prophetic Fragments* (1988), West speaks movingly about the personal needs that Christianity fulfills for him. He argues forcefully that the left must appreciate the importance of maintaining ties to churches, synagogues, temples and mosques—all of which are crucial in day-to-day community life.

But when West highlights Christianity as a supplement to pragmatism, and when he furthermore approvingly discusses or refers to Raymond Williams, Gramsci, Edward Said and others outside the pragmatic tradition, he creates problems for his argument. If pragmatism requires so many sustained, serious adjustments, and if West himself finds that he frequently must look elsewhere for intellectual inspiration

and moral guidance, then how central is it?

West's portraits of pragmatic intellectuals are superb, but sometimes he underplays his criticism. He mentions, for example, Randolph Bourne's famous attack on Dewey for rallying behind Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war in 1917. But West seems not to acknowledge the devastating nature of Bourne's indictment of pragmatism as perfectly suited to the prosecution of war, the spread of commerce and business and the self-serving advancement of "expert" intellectuals eager to control the country. When Bourne saw the sorts of changes in American society that pragmatism wrought, he found them alarming. By viewing the war as a great opportunity for the modernization of America and the world, Dewey was not so much perverting or betraying pragmatism as he was, declared Bourne, exposing the destructive logic and moral callousness at its core.

**Rorty sortie:** On other occasions, West is extremely critical of the pragmatists, particularly in his excellent discussion of Rorty's work, which West admires but finally terms "too broad, too thin, devoid of the realities of power." But to say this is to suggest that Rorty's ideas are badly flawed indeed. Does Rorty

help us to move forward, or does he coolly direct us toward a dead end of self-congratulatory liberalism? Rorty has stated that "we should be more willing than we are to celebrate bourgeois capitalist society as the best polity actualized so far, while regretting that it is irrelevant to most of the problems of most of the population of the planet."

Rorty claims to be impatient with academic philosophy, but a position like his obviously functions to legitimize the status of someone (like himself) who is highly rewarded and honored within that academy. One wants to reply to Rorty that if bourgeois capitalist society is irrelevant to most of the world's problems, then he ought to reassess his cheery endorsement of it.

### Brilliant portraits of pragmatists that integrate shrewd commentary and cogent analysis.

West also judges Roberto Unger severely, concluding that he pays little attention to "the burning cultural and political issues in the everyday lives of ordinary people" (drugs, alcoholism, the impact of the media, the breakdown of the family, the declining power of trade unions, racial and sexual violence). Yet the irony is that in this book West does not devote much attention to these issues either. He is deeply concerned

about them but is unable to engage them in the context of American pragmatism.

West maintains that pragmatism helps address these problems but at the same time indicates that pragmatism can work for us only if we blend it with the theory and practice of many other people who are not pragmatists. At one point he names Sojourner Truth, Walter Rauschenbusch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr., and elsewhere he invokes similar groups of non-pragmatic reformers and activists. But this hurts rather than helps West's case. One could conceivably argue that a person dedicated to social change could look to these men and women for sustenance without bothering about the pragmatists at all.

In a sense, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* is an uncomfortable combination of two books. It is, first, a magnificent account of American pragmatism that demonstrates West's formidable learning and insight. It is also an appeal for social change and an impassioned call for intellectuals to join in popular struggle. Possibly the pragmatists can foster campaigns for change, but, as West repeatedly shows, their work needs to be vigorously contested and corrected. Their legacy is mixed at best, for they have done much to create the very conditions that oppress and manipulate America's people, and that radicals continue to feel obliged to resist.

William E. Cain writes frequently for *In These Times*.

### Another Theory of Dinosaur Extinction





## Tubular hells: Tabloid TV makes the move uptown

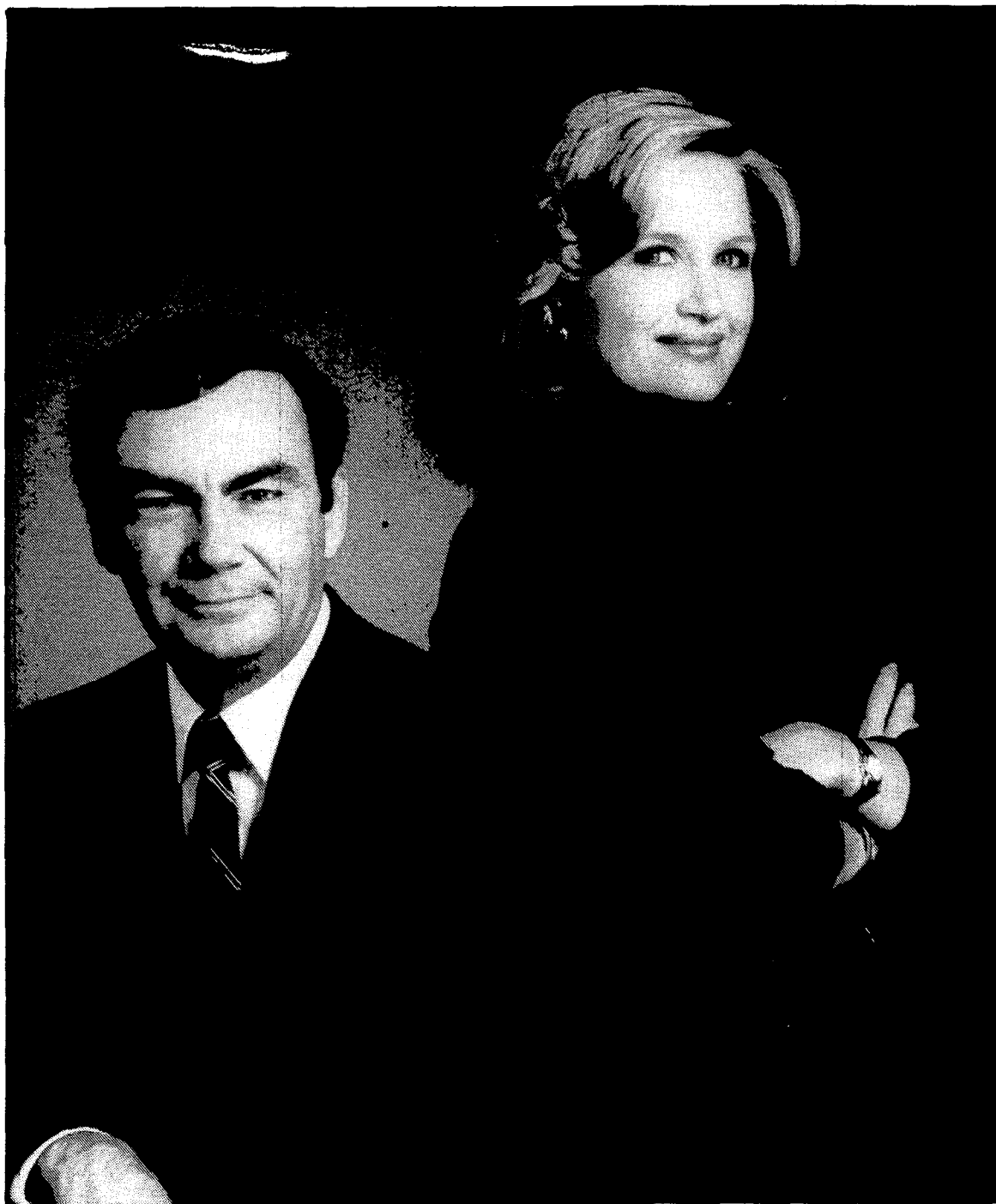
By Susan J. Douglas

IT WAS EARLY AUGUST. TV WAS FILLED with reruns and I couldn't resist the hype. Two new TV news-magazines were about to premiere, just one day apart from each other on rival networks, and those assigned to promote them unleashed their most overinflated prose to get us to tune in.

NBC's offering, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, promised to be "television's time machine," taking us back to the past as well as into the future. On this show, we were told breathlessly, there would be "three sides to every story." If we tuned into this "journey through time," we would come away with "a whole new way of looking at the world."

Not to be outdone, ABC took a martial arts approach to its rhetoric. Hyped for weeks as the journalistic equivalent of the Thrilla from Manila, *PrimeTime Live* would feature two "of the most formidable journalists" in the world, including the woman who "made sushi out of the Japanese mafia." Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson (together, at last!) were going to take on a tough new assignment: "The world." In the TV promotions, as we were asked to imagine what would happen if these two actually got their own show, Sam and Diane sidled up to each other menacingly and smiled knowingly at us, looking like two piranhas deciding whether to mate or eat each other alive. If we tuned in here, our "world would never be the same."

**The bad news:** Well, my world certainly needed a change, so I had to watch both offerings. *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* has aired twice so far, with promises that it will begin airing regularly in mid-September. *PrimeTime Live*, trying to build an audience during the rerun doldrums, has begun airing every Thursday. The good news is that probably only one of these shows will survive into October. The



*PrimeTime Live*: a little ditty about Sam and Diane, two newshounds who sensationalize the bland.

do we get those dreaded "dramatic recreations" of crimes, now we get them even of crimes from 80 years ago.

There is the required sensationalizing of peoples' reproductive activities (an important new genre of news in the '80s) and, my favorite, the complete rewriting of

use of video technology establishes that the "journalist" needn't be anywhere near the story in space or time in order to cover it!

In case you missed the premiere, let me briefly review. The first story, "told" by Scarborough, was about two murder cases, one in 1906, the other in 1989, in which advances in fingerprinting helped convict the criminal by placing him at the scene of the crime. Relying primarily on dramatic recreations of the murders, police investigations and trials, past and present, without ever once using the label "recreation" or "simulation," the show offers the audience some scenes no third party, living or dead, ever saw.

As with *America's Most Wanted*, homicide becomes a spectator sport, and the voyeurism of murder is made titillating. But also, in both murder cases, the perpetrators were black men and the victims white. As Chuck Scarborough celebrates the "good that technology can do," we see that human and technical progress is defined, in part, by the authorities' ability to keep black men

under surveillance and to catch them even if they seem to have slipped through the shadows of the night.

**Woodstock degeneration:** The next story, hosted by Mary Alice Williams, was yet another entry in the media reconstruction of Woodstock. This particular interpretation managed to contain all the loathsome, neocon clichés about the '60s while completely ignoring—and thus erasing—the real reasons for and legacy of Woodstock. "On the shores where naked hippies once frolicked," intones Williams, "yuppie vacation homes now stand." She reunites six friends and brings them back to Woodstock to reflect on their youthful ideals and present lives.

"I spent 30 years trying to figure out how *not* to live like my parents," laments one man, "and now I'm trying to figure out *how* to do it." Another man, presumably *because* of Woodstock, became a drug dealer, got busted and then had to rebuild his life. The only woman in the group, who, we are told, "dreamed of a glamorous job and carefree life,"

is now a disillusioned, beleaguered, financially strapped divorced mother. The entire segment, focusing as it does on peoples' lifestyles—their marital status, where they live, what they do for a living, what they consume—emphasized the deluded, self-indulgent naiveté of the '60s and how that naiveté left many scarred for life. These poor bastards "grew up," sadly learning, according to Williams, that "it's hard to hang onto the freedom of yesterday."

The "Woodstock Generation" emerges as a monolithic and broken generation for whom the '60s had no positive influence or legacy. The one man in this group who decided to live in rural Vermont and work in a non-career-track, low-pressure job is viewed as a somewhat pathetic case of arrested development who will, sooner or later, have to face reality.

Nowhere in this piece do we hear these people, or any others, talk about how the '60s, which Woodstock has been made to symbolize, influenced their attitudes toward war, the environment, race relations or sexual politics. The '60s were very much about public politics, yet it is the politics that shows such as these suck out.

Maria Shriver's piece, which compared two couples, one of whom chose to terminate several fetuses in a multiple pregnancy so the remaining fetuses would survive, and another couple who chose to try to deliver all their babies, was beneath contempt. But it was another important assault in the ongoing journalistic conquest of the private, the painful and the intimate. Here it had a special twist since Shriver, herself expecting a baby in September, oozed with sympathy, while knowing full well that her ultrasounds, her gynecological records and her reproductive decision-making processes would not be used to entertain millions of unknown, gaping viewers, but would remain privileged information.

Although it's unclear whether this program will survive, it shows us where some TV executives want to take the news. The reliance on dramatic recreations, and their extension into the past, not only blurs the distinctions between news and entertainment, it also imposes present-day assumptions and concerns onto very different eras, distorting and simplifying history.

**A hotbed of hot beds:** The superimposition of stars onto different scenes visually establishes the distance between these glitzy celebrity elites and the less-privileged unfortunates they report on. This special effect also suggests that TV journalists can go anywhere, which is not only a lie, but also highly undesirable. The place I especially don't

**Sam Donaldson and Diane Sawyer sidled up to each other menacingly and smiled knowingly at us, looking like two piranhas deciding whether to mate or eat each other alive.**

bad news is—you guessed it—the casualties probably won't include Donaldson and Sawyer.

*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* succeeds in taking all the sleaziest, most irresponsible developments in electronic journalism and combining them into a Frankenstein hybrid of *America's Most Wanted*, *Inside Edition* and *Evening Magazine*. Not only

American cultural and political history along neoconservative lines. But there was more, especially one key innovation that could revolutionize all news shows. The stars—Chuck Scarborough, Mary Alice Williams and Maria Shriver—are obviously superimposed over rear projection shots of the stories they are about to cover. This daring



want them is in peoples' bedrooms. But, thanks to tabloid TV, the talk shows and newsmagazines like this, the bedroom seems to be the hottest beat in TV journalism.

The format implications of *PrimeTime Live* are a bit different. This is a show enthralled with government authority, condescending to anyone not part of the Washington elite, contemptuous of common folk and bloated with its own sense of importance (see accompanying story). Diane Sawyer, who has refined crossing her legs and holding a pencil into the signifier of female competence, and Sam Donaldson, who does a lot of grimacing and chest-puffing, ooze self-satisfaction and a

## TELEVISION

palpable level of deadly rivalry. You can almost hear her thinking, "I'm so much smoother," while he thinks, "I'm much more seasoned and smarter." There's real chemistry here: they can barely keep from choking each other on camera.

The gimmick on this show is that it airs live and has a studio audience. This is supposed to make it seem more spontaneous than its competitors, and the promise is held out to viewers that maybe Sam or Diane will produce some good bloopers. As Diane puts it, "No parachutes here." Sam then tells us that "we're going to work with our studio audience, not as Phil or Oprah do—they are terrific shows," he lies, "but that's not us." He promises the show will be more like an on-air town meeting.

Their first guest is Thomas Root, the Washington, D.C., lawyer, gun collector and aviator who was fished out of the water near the Bahamas with a gunshot wound in his gut and a team of investigators on his butt.



Why this guy was given a podium is anybody's guess, especially since the interview was constructed so he could deny a host of charges. "Have you ever been involved in drugs or drug sales?" probed Diane in her best schoolmarm tone. What's he going to say? Sure, I deal drugs. By the way, need some toot? It was all like that. These two pose as hard-nosed investigative reporters, unafraid of the tough questions. But by using such a ham-handed interviewing approach, they learn nothing new and simply provide a forum for

denial.

**Everybody is president:** Next we learned that Sam and Diane were going to "let" us be president. First, Chris Wallace provided a "background report" on the August hostage crisis. Then "we" were brought into a strategy session between former CIA director Stansfield Turner and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Noel Koch about whether a hostage rescue mission in Beirut was a feasible option. Then members of the studio audience, serving as surrogates for all of us at home, were supposed to stand up and say what they would do about the hostage situation if they were president.

Sam quickly turned this into a yes no dilemma: would anyone in the audience use force against the terrorists? Anyone who wanted to move beyond the narrow boundaries of this question was cut off. And, as you can imagine, those audience members who spoke couldn't come up with anything better than what Bush was doing.

Donaldson kept goading the audience—wouldn't *anyone* use force?—until one young man said yes, providing Donaldson with the opportunity he was seeking. He lectured, self-importantly, "I was there the day when Ronald Reagan met the families of the hostages, and it so moved him that many people believe it was right there that he decided to sign on to an arms-for-hostages plan."

So Sam Donaldson, the man who was constantly promoting himself as the major thorn in Reagan's side, the one journalist who wouldn't take Deaver-style news management lying down, now rehabilitates the Iran-contra scandal by chalking it up to Reagan's deeply felt, teary-eyed empathy with other good Americans. Later we had to listen to Donaldson reminisce about how, despite the constant constraints on him, Reagan "made being president look easy.... He was so good at all of those things in the Rose Garden." Hmmm.

The effect of this "we're gonna let you be president" gambit is to reinforce the elitism that already enshrouds and protects Washington decision-makers. The show pretends that the studio audience has been as well briefed as Bush (when, of course, there's plenty the former head of the CIA knows that we don't) and then shows that regular Americans can't come close to being thoughtful, sophisticated or competent in such a situation. We're better off deferring to our betters and thinking simplistically in terms of force no force.

**Anything can happen, and doesn't:** One thing was also clear about this portion of the show—Donaldson doesn't know how to work with a studio audience and the segment was a disaster. He and Sawyer are more comfortable when they're in complete control, or when they're talking to government officials. In subsequent shows, the studio audience was completely ig-

nored and has only been "worked with" once again, in a discussion about whether Pete Rose should or should not be banned from baseball. So much for electronic town meetings.

The hype for the second show read, "Watch two of television's most daring journalists work without a net." The text continued, "Anything can happen on live television." As we watched with baited breath, the plunge occurred! Diane's hoop earring fell out of her ear before millions. At the end of the next show, she cooed proudly, "I kept my earrings on tonight," to which Donaldson snarled sardonically, "That's terrific." He needn't have been so shirty: the falling earring was

light, sifting unglamorously through government documents and committee reports. The Sam-and-Diane approach, which hinges on asking the unanswerable question before millions, suggests that when you get the inevitable public denial, you've done your job as a reporter and can do no more. The whole notion of what's possible in journalism becomes narrowed and deeply compromised.

The best thing about this show is how often we get to see Sam Donaldson soil himself in public. On the first show, prompted by the film *When Harry Met Sally* and reflecting on male-vs.-female friendships, Donaldson informed the audience that "men often *can* have very

## Both *PrimeTime Live* and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* extend another repellent trend in electronic journalism: the display of troubled or unusual people as freaks for us "normal" people to gawk at, pity, judge and distance ourselves from.

the most exciting moment on the show.

On the third show, Sam and Diane interviewed Dan Quayle. Once again, under the guise of investigative journalism, we got such stupid and flat-footed questions as, "Is your wife smarter than you are?" It's true, they did get Quayle to say things like, "I stand by all the misstatements that I've made." But still, the pose these two assume distorts what constitutes decent investigative reporting. Little of value is ever exposed by asking someone questions on national television that, if answered honestly, would lead to criminal indictment, loss of one's job, or divorce.

Real investigative journalism occurs, most often, away from the spot-

light, sifting unglamorously through government documents and committee reports. The Sam-and-Diane approach, which hinges on asking the unanswerable question before millions, suggests that when you get the inevitable public denial, you've done your job as a reporter and can do no more. The whole notion of what's possible in journalism becomes narrowed and deeply compromised.

**The lure of the lurid:** Both *PrimeTime Live* and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* extend another repellent trend in electronic journalism: the display of troubled or unusual people as freaks for us "normal" people to gawk at, pity, judge and distance ourselves from. The pretense, again, is usually some daring investigative report, usually of some institution that houses the physically or mentally disabled.

These exposés are hyped as if they were scary but entertaining horror movies. Inevitably they begin with the following warning: "The footage we are about to see is very graphic." Posing as the voice of sober journalistic responsibility, this is really the voice of the carnival barker, luring us into the tent to see what lies suspended in the formaldehyde. Now it's not that the inhumane treatment these people receive shouldn't be exposed. It's the way it's done, in a highly lurid fashion that invariably violates the victims' privacy and objectifies them as features in some haunted house that we, the audience, can ride through briefly and then flee.

It is the increasing and often frantic insistence that news *must* be entertaining (rather than informative, thought-provoking or educational) that fuels the ongoing degradation of non-fiction television. Even as they seek, through dramatic recreations or audience participation, to increase a sense of viewer involvement, these shows really encourage a vicarious, temporary and ersatz connection to the world, and especially to the world of politics. That world is best left to informed elites while we stay in the cabaret distracted by an anomalous and fast-moving parade of the gorgeous pursuing and probing the grotesque.

Meanwhile, genuine scandals (the S&L bailout, the HUD giveaways) that demonstrate how deeply corrupt the government has become when it comes to rewarding and protecting entrenched economic interests—are ignored. It is infotainment like this—enamored of its own gimmicks, top-heavy with overpaid, complacent stars and more concerned with style and form than substance—that continues to erode what final shreds of integrity might be left in electronic journalism. ■  
Susan J. Douglas is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

## Television violence, con and con

Whether in prison (as I am currently) or in the "free world"—you may soon be turning the tube to your favorite cop program. But what is billed as just entertainment is selling political ideology too: authority is always right, law and order, protect the status quo, the myth of "justice" in the "criminal justice" system.

Television does not make children violent. Television violence makes children passive. Television tends to teach children to look to authorities to keep order in the world (see accompanying story).

A good example of these anti-people politics is the violation of people's constitutional rights by television cops. In any random week a viewer will find many clear constitutional violations—brutalizing people, performing illegal searches and seizures of property and not advis-

ing people of their rights.

Scores of citizens uninvolved in the crime under investigation are roughed up, shaken down or harassed—by police. Homes, offices and cars are broken into regularly—by police. With a sixth sense that only scriptwriters can generate, every such invasion of personal privacy turns up the real, and usually demented, criminal, or is justified because the victim was probably guilty of some crime anyway. Honest, law-abiding citizens are miraculously never hurt by these methods.

The message we are getting is that authority is never wrong. The desired image is of a paternalistic great society in which all law enforcement agents are properly motivated and their opponents are drug dealers, crazies and un-American weirdos. It is clearly not good to criticize the institutions of the

country.

This violence by authorities, such as the violence of individual cops, or teachers, is accepted as the solution to social problems. Television gives us no examples of how to solve problems by trusting and learning from other people and getting together to change things.

We don't think that television has the power over us to determine how we think and act. But it seems pretty clear that its message is not in our interests—to make things better—but instead to keep things the way they are. The next time you tune in to your favorite cop show, check it out to see whose interests are served.

—Adam Starchild

(Adam Starchild is serving 10 years for tax fraud at the federal prison in Sandstone, Minn. He is author of numerous books and articles, primarily on business.)



## South Africa

Continued from page 9

is the economy, which has been wracked by an inflation rate of nearly 16 percent and an unemployment rate that in some regions is as high as 56 percent. South Africa is also being starved of foreign capital. Last year there was a net capital outflow of about \$3 billion, while the foreign exchange crisis has been compounded by a falling South African rand. The ANC and internal anti-apartheid groups are pressuring foreign banks not to extend short-term loans that are due to be renegotiated next year. "It's getting through to the Nats that sanctions are working, the pressure is working," said Mike Daly, chief economist for Southern Life, one of the country's largest financial firms.

But at home, an opposing, if not equal, pressure on de Klerk is his own constituency, particularly his police force, which under the state of emergency has held an especially powerful position in the government. Since early this year, the National Party has shown signs of bowing to international pressure at the expense of the power of the "securocrats," which former President P.W. Botha built into a formidable force in the government.

Is a disgruntled police force now trying to use the Defiance Campaign to win back lost ground? Political activists and commentators here think there is evidence to show that, in some cases, the police have deliberately provoked violence in order to stamp out opposition.

De Klerk is making a concerted effort to be above the fray," commented Boesak. "He is trying to appear as amenable as possible, while at the same time his police open water cannons on protesters and mercilessly beat up people, including young children." It clearly would not have suited the image of the new leader to be seen on newscasts around the world against a backdrop of bloodied black protesters.

The escalating police violence has not only marginalized the election but has also dimmed hopes of postelection negotiations, or even the release of Nelson Mandela, which has become the yardstick of reform for George Bush and Margaret Thatcher. It is difficult to imagine how talks with black leaders can get underway when their followers are still nursing injuries because they dared to protest openly in the streets of Stellenbosch, or go to whites-only beaches, or hold prayer services.

Pippa Green is a Cape Town journalist.

## CALENDAR

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is \$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of **ITT Calendar**.

### NEW YORK

September 10-16

THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL  
SUNDAY, Sept. 10—Ghosts of Law (art opening), Bob Dombrowski, 6 p.m.  
MONDAY, Sept. 11—International Grass-Roots Organizing, German Young Democrats, 6 p.m.  
SATURDAY, Sept. 16—On Puerto Rican Independence; Mildred Colon, Victor Vasquez and Agustin Lao; 8 p.m.

All events take place at the Brecht Forum, 79 Leonard St. (five blocks below Canal, between Church and Broadway). Unless otherwise listed, admission is \$5. For information call (212) 941-0332. Classes begin October 2.

October 26-29

GRASS-ROOTS COMMUNICATIONS for Democratic Social, Cultural and Political Change. Union for Democratic Communications 1989 Conference and Annual Meeting. Hunter and Marymount Manhattan College, New York City. Information: Mark Schulman, City College of New York, Shepard Hall 16, New York, NY 10031, (212) 690-6741.

### AMES, IOWA

September 17-20

"Critiques of Capitalist Agriculture. Speakers: Michael Perelman on Farming for Profit, S.K. Thorat on the Green Revolution in Asia, Merle Hanson on Progressive Farm Movements, Susan Mann on Patriarchy and Agriculture. For information contact Tony Smith, (515) 294-3341.

### SEATTLE

September 23

The Seattle Rainforest Action Group and other co-sponsors present The Lacandone Rainforest Project Conference, "A Common Destiny," from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Daybreak Star Cultural Center in Discovery Park. The future of the Mayan Lacandone, whose lives are intimately linked to the land, rests with the future of their rainforests. Although part of their homeland is a designated biological reserve, much has already been destroyed, and what remains is seriously threatened from deforestation. Conference goals include educating the public about the Lacandone culture and exploring ways to help in preserving their forests. Bringing together the Lacandone and six Northwest Indian tribes, this conference will be a unique experience for the audience and the Lacandone leaders, who have never before left their forest homeland. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. For information contact The Lacandone Rainforest Project, P.O. Box 95967, Seattle, WA 98145; Lisa Dabek, (206) 547-2378, or Kurt Russo, (206) 647-6258.

### CHICAGO

September 23

Illinois Labor History Society presents "Writers as Workers," a symposium examining the literary and political significance of the WPA Writers' Project in Illinois, which created the famous *WPA Guide to Illinois* in 1939. Among the working writers attending the 50th anniversary reunion are Studs Terkel, Margaret Walker, Maridel LeSeur, Franklin Folsom, Sam Ross, Marion Knoblauch Franc and Dave Peltz. Top-flight scholars Jerre Mangione, Alan Wald, Douglas Wixson, Michael Anania, Lorraine Brown, Neil Harris and J. Fred MacDonald will participate. The event takes place at the Newberry Library of Chicago (60 W. Walton St.) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The symposium is co-sponsored with the cooperation of READ ILLINOIS, a program of the Illinois State Library and the Secretary of State, Jim Edgar. For information contact: Alan Harris Stein, Project Director, or Leslie F. Orear, I.L.H.S. President, at (312) 663-4107.

September 23

CHICAGO DSA presents a memorial celebration of Michael Harrington's life and works on Saturday, 12 noon at ACTWU Hall, 333 S. Ashland. Invited guests include Rev. Jim Gorman, Roberta Lynch, Carl Shier, Studs Terkel and William Julius Wilson. Call 384-0327 for information. Parking available at the Hall.

### LOVELAND, OHIO

October 6-8

Grailville presents *The Earth is Our Mother and North America is Our Home* with featured speakers Lynn Crow, M.A.; Deborah Lee, M.S. and Audrey Schomer, B.A. An opportunity to share and celebrate with people who care about the Earth; to learn more about natural technologies, art and world-view; to forage, prepare and eat wild foods; to explore what it means to be "at home" in North America. We will share ideas, music, songs, dance, storytelling, prayer and ritual. Cost: \$125 for the weekend. For information and registration, write or call: Grailville Programs, 932 O'Bannonville Rd., Loveland, OH 45140, (513) 683-2340.

### INDIANA, PA

October 18-20

IUP Symposium, "Searching for New Horizons: The University at the Gateway of the 21st Century." Speakers include Bernard Harleston, Stanley Aronowitz, Nathan Glazer, Bobby Seale, David Noble and Philip Altbach. Contact: Irwin Marcus, History Department, IUP, Indiana, PA 15705, (412) 357-2237 or 2284.

### WASHINGTON, DC

Fall 1989

The Washington School Fall Program of Politics, Ideas and Culture. *Evening Courses* beginning October 11: *Drug Policy and the Latin American Cocaine Industry*, *Safeguarding Abortion Rights*, *Beyond 20th Century Politics*, *What's Wrong With This Picture? The Black Character in Mainstream Film*, *Internationalism Today*. *Special Events*: October 27: Poet, essayist and playwright June Jordan; November 30: *Philosopher of education* Henry Giroux; December 15: Theologian and social critic Cornel West. The Continuing Education Program of The Institute for Policy Studies, 1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 234-9382.

## Lightning

Continued from page 24

have no one to blame but yourself.") And there are the unemployed steelworkers of Braddock, who keep breathing through the narrative with demonstrations, meetings and community work but who can't seem to rally enough support to get the steel mills reopened.

Most of all, it's about the precarious link between individual and community in an America captivated by media images and fame.

**Truth in fiction:** *Lightning over Braddock* defies description as either documentary or fiction. It's surely about Buba and Braddock; it uses real TV clips, footage from his earlier films as illustration, and a deadpan personal narrative by Buba himself.

But a good part of the film is scripted, including scenes that look documentary. For instance, at a demonstration to protest the closing of a steel mill, a woman points approvingly to someone she says is filming the protest for Talking Heads. "Finally, sophisticated media people who know how to tell story are getting involved," she tells Buba. "Your subjectivity may be poetic and well-intentioned, but it's probably provincial." (Buba says that, although the scene itself is scripted, the dialogue

is straight from a conversation he overheard at a cocktail party.) Videotape from local TV interviews with Buba is overlaid with his own commentary; outtakes slyly show how TV turns reality into a sound bite.

The film also borrows freely from the world of Hollywood movies. Sal stars in vignettes referring to epics like *Gandhi* and *The Godfather*—a commentary on Sal's grandiose dreams. Jimmy Roy puts nostalgia in a frame as he sings, Las Vegas nightclub-style, the film's campy theme song—"Braddock, City of Magic...Where Have You Gone?"—framed in a semidemolished factory doorway.

"I mixed fiction and documentary because I wanted the viewers to be in doubt about what was real and what wasn't, instead of just sitting there and being a good consumer," says Buba. Some of the devices work better than others, but because it's loaded with rich characters and played for homemade humor, *Lightning over Braddock* keeps audiences both unsettled and entertained.

**Irony and idealism:** The central character, Buba himself, is also a persona, exemplifying the way our fantasies penetrate our realities. This character is Buba as idealistic naïf, a guy who worries about things like getting into heaven and discovering, not St. Peter, but Sacco and Vanzetti at the gates. He's a guy

who obsessively patches together his own little piece of fame while the town around him collapses.

"I wanted the audience to be annoyed with me," Buba explains. "I wanted the audience to ask, 'Why isn't he doing more on the important issues? Why does he want to make a Hollywood film?'"

*Lightning over Braddock* finally brought Buba to Hollywood, but not for his Big Break. In Los Angeles he ran into an old neighbor from Braddock, now an industry scriptwriter and director. The guy is thinking about making a mainstream movie, *Braddock*, a prospect that raised Buba's hackles. He finally decides a Hollywood movie would only provide more material for his own films and would bring money into the town.

"When you go out there, you do get these really weird ideas, though," he says. "Maybe I should do a horror film about a steel company president who gets caught inside the mill after it's shut down and attacked by a Freddy Kruger-type character in revenge for people losing their jobs. It could have all kinds of sequel possibilities—Freddy could go after Frank Lorenzo next."

Who knows? Sacco and Vanzetti at the gate might like that.

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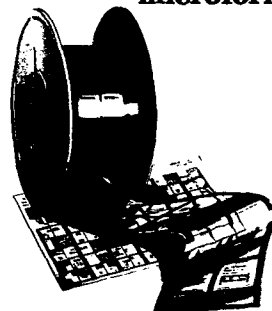
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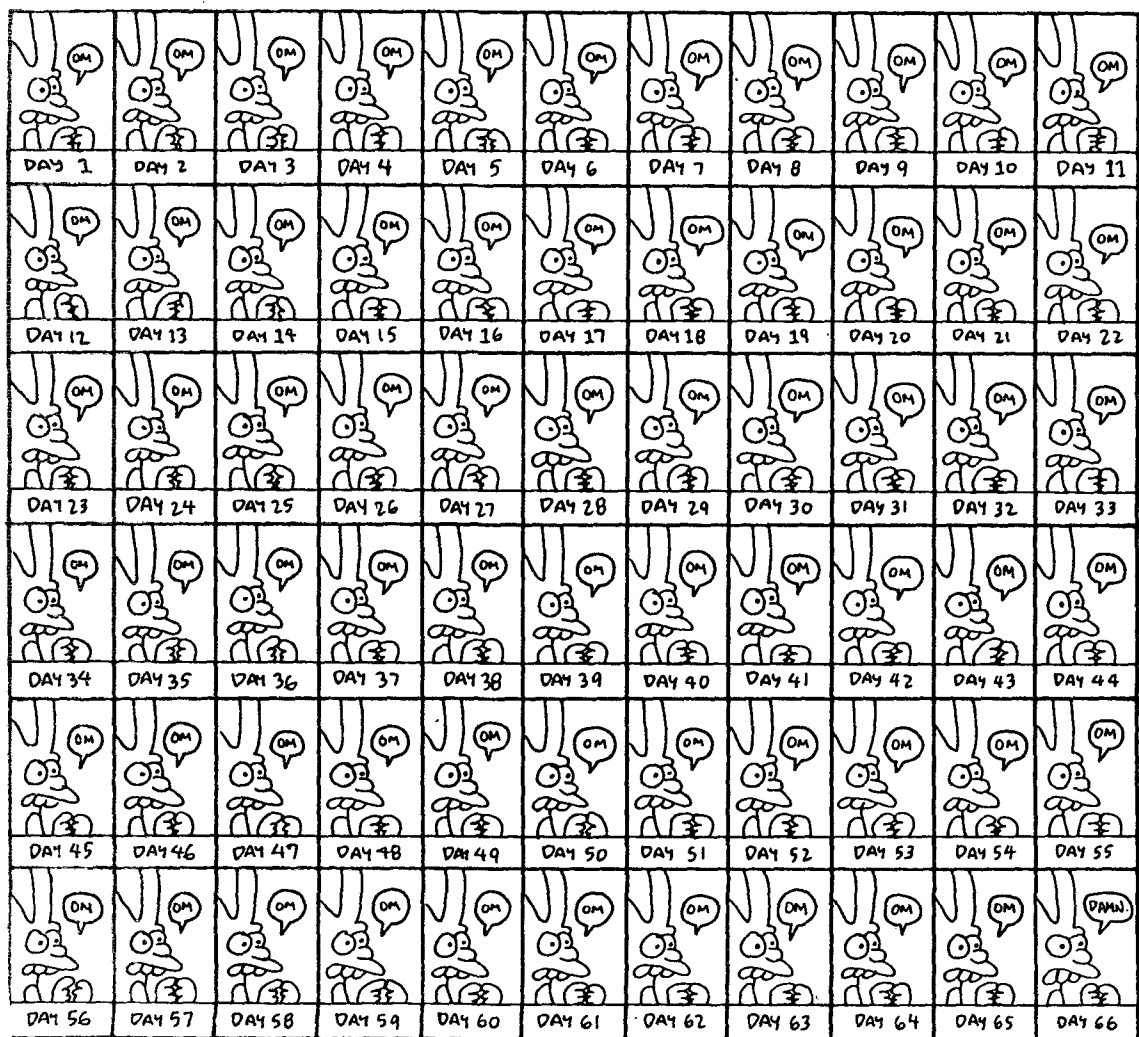
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By Pat Aufderheide

**N**EAR THE END OF HIS 14TH FILM AND first feature, *Lightning over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy*, filmmaker Tony Buba goes to confession. The priest—a figure from his Italian Catholic childhood in steeltown Braddock, Pa.—asks him his most grievous sin.

"I want to make a Hollywood musical!" blurts out Buba.

And for Buba, that probably is a sin, even though *Lightning over Braddock* does have a musical episode. But it takes place in an abandoned steel factory. The robotized workers' chants make clear that the Pittsburgh of, say, *Flashdance* was on another planet.

Midway through the film, workers at a local newspaper party to "Jumpin' Jack Flash," played on the accordion. But there's no sound. Rights to the song would have cost \$15,000—three times the annual income of the average Braddock resident.

Buba asks us to sing along ourselves and explains in voiceover: "What if, when I get to heaven, instead of St. Peter at the gate, it's Sacco and Vanzetti? And they say, 'You paid \$15,000 for a song instead of spending that money for political organizing?' I wouldn't get in."

Buba is an independent filmmaker who dates from the days when the term "indie" connoted "socially conscious." A decade ago, when Glenn Silber (now with *60 Minutes*) was making *The War at Home* about the history of anti-war protest, Buba was making movies about his hometown, in the heart of the Rustbowl.

He still is.

"A lot of documentary filmmakers jump from one subject to another," Buba told *In These Times*. "You could call it left-wing ambulance chasing." No one will accuse Buba of that, not even the Buba-persona of this film, who dreams of the Big Break.

**Rustbowl record:** Braddock was once known as Pittsburgh's shopping center. Its main street is now called "Plywood Avenue" because of all the boarded-up buildings. Buba's documentaries chronicle—though that was not his original intention—the decline of Braddock. They also chronicle—though that was not his intention either—the decline of an era in socially conscious filmmaking and the rise of Buba's reputation as an offbeat filmmaker.

Working for years in grant-starved obscurity, Buba has finally won fame for the idiosyncratic *Lightning over Braddock*, which debuted in major cities this spring to positive (if sometimes perplexed) reviews and is now available on videotape, along with a collection of his shorts assembled as "The Braddock Chronicles" (from Zeitgeist Films, 200 Waverly Place, #1, New York, NY 10014).

Buba has been called "Braddock's Boswell," though the image he renders may not always be the one Braddock residents expect. His films all have a home-movie quality and an appreciation for the idiosyncratic in daily life that typifies the films of Errol Morris (*Gates of Heaven*, *The Thin Blue Line*). And they have the zest for the grotesque-in-the-ordinary that was displayed in the award-winning Australian documentary *Cane Toads*. (Or maybe it's the kind of grotesque that Buba learned while working on the horror films of George Romero, another Pittsburgh-area filmmaker.)

# From Rustville to Tinseltown



Documentary maker Tony Buba goes sort of Hollywood in *Lightning over Braddock*.

In *J. Roy: New and Used Furniture*, Buba introduced us to a Braddock entrepreneur who's failed at 12 businesses and is busy teaching would-be entrepreneurs self-confidence. *Sweet Sal* is a portrait of wiry, engaging street hustler Sal Caru, whose cocky patter breaks down at the end of the film when he visits his father's grave. *The Mill Hunk Herald* is a trip inside a Steel Valley workers' magazine, which looks like raw material for a Bruce Springsteen song.

As Buba has continued to make movies about Braddock, he's become a local celebrity, and so have his subjects—especially the volatile Sal. That's not what he expected. He thought he was making movies that would mobilize the masses, or at least, as he says, "raise consciousness." He's won plenty of film festival awards, a Guggenheim grant and lavish praise from renowned German filmmaker Werner

Herzog. But he hasn't gotten rich and still pays the rent by making industrial videos and taking occasional teaching jobs.

**Fame and fantasy:** Now, in *Lightning over Braddock*, Buba turns his camera on a subject that epitomizes the contradictions in Braddock today: himself, the media figure of a place slipping right off the map of America. The title is a funky reference to *Lightning over Water*, Wim Wenders "metafiction" about a filmmaker—Nicholas Ray—dying of cancer.

*Lightning over Braddock* is self-reflexive in the most fashionable, postmodern way. And it's also reflexive in the more old-fashioned sense of looking critically at our lives. At the center is not just the story of Tony Buba, hometown filmmaker, but the question of how to find the real when your expectations are loaded with fantasy. Buba's asking us to ask ourselves about fame, failure and the flyover zone

under America's bicoastal media image.

This is a story, on one level, about a director (Buba) trying to make a movie with a temperamental actor in poor health (Sal) whose fights with the director keep screwing up the story. While Buba is haplessly struggling to make his documentaries, he gets offered a chance at the big break—a Hollywood script starring himself and Sal. Trying to make that happen, though, precipitates a crisis between the director and his star.

At another level, it's a story about the fantasies that keep people in the Rustbowl from getting control over their own lives, from making themselves the subject of their own movie. There's Buba's fantasy—Hollywood! There's Sal's fantasy of becoming a famous actor. There's Jimmy Roy's fantasy of finally making it in business. (He keeps telling people, "You

Continued on page 22